

E A C H S E X
IN THEIR
H U M O U R :
OR, THE
H I S T O R I E S

Of the Families of

BRIGHTLEY,		SHELBURNE,
FINCH,		AND
FORTESCUE,		STEVENS.

Written by a Lady of QUALITY,
Whilst she was abroad on her Travels, and found
among her Papers since her decease.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. II.

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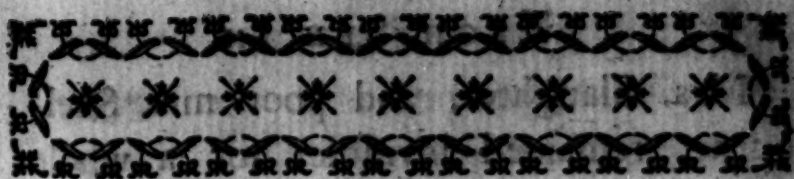
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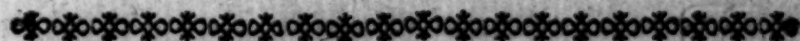
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EACH PAGE
OF THE
HISTORY

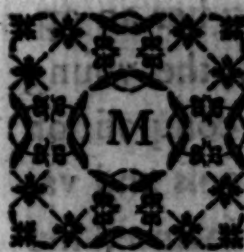




EACH SEX IN THEIR HUMOUR.



BOOK IV.



R. Finch imputed the baronet's shyness, with respect to Mr. Stapleton's proposal, to his youth and inexperience, and was far from suspecting the real cause ; he, therefore, proposed it to lady Brightley, and, as her ladyship entirely approved of it, he gave the old man the utmost encouragement.

Mrs. Slaughter, and poor miss Shelburne, remained invisible, for a whole week, to every inhabitant of Brightley (except the curate and Mrs. Alice) at which period, to the terror and consternation of Mr. Stevens, the young lady's mother arrived, he happening to be an eye-witness of her alighting at the parsonage-house, and hastened home, with a death-like countenance, to inform his friend of this new calamity.

Lady Brightley bade him take comfort, as, perhaps, so far from an evil, Mrs. Shelburne's revisiting Brightley might prove a lucky circumstance, by giving her an opportunity, personally, to plead the young lady's cause; and the mother's composition having as large a share of weakness and vanity in it, as obstinacy and violence, her ladyship flattered herself, that, by humouring those foibles with propriety, the faults of her temper might be softened, if not totally subdued, and resolved to drop in, as if accidentally, and, without delay, endeavour

deavour to effect this good purpose. She accordingly set forth for the house of her sister, who was prepared to defeat her generous design, and had instructed Mrs. Alice, her husband's useful domestic, to inform her ladyship, that Mrs. Shelburne was too much indisposed to receive company.

Lady Brightley was both disappointed and offended at this unexpected repulse. She was sensible it was no more than a finesse of her sister's; but, as she was incapable of retaliating an ungenteel action, she returned home, mortified, disconcerted, and, on miss Shelburne's account, greatly concerned. The ill success of this attempt affected Mr. Stevens to such a degree, as to render him quite unguarded, though in her ladyship's presence, with respect to his inclination for her fair friend; yet so considerate was this good lady, as to appear unmindful of his extreme emotion, and tender complaints, and, in order to save him from uneasy reflections, on the recovery of

his recollection, she withdrew, and left him in the care of his friend, who used every kind method to compose him.

The next morning lady Brightley made a second attempt to see Mrs. Shelburne, but was equally unsuccessful as she had been the preceding day. The curate played least in sight, to avoid becoming a party in the affair, and the second morning, before the rising sun, was this young lady conveyed from Brightley, and every object that could give her delight, accompanied only by a mother, inconceivably unnatural, and unfeeling.

The amiable girl supported the calamity of being torn from all she held dear, with an amazing fortitude, and performed the journey, notwithstanding the persecution she underwent, of reproachful taunts, and unjust accusations, free from all apparent fatigue or discomposure. Her father received her with a contracted brow, and, assuming an uncommon sternness of accent, demanded,

demanded, if he beheld an obedient, or undutiful child? Miss Lucy replied, she hoped she had never merited the latter appellation. ‘No equivocation, girl,’ returned this unkind parent, ‘it is not professions, but actions, that shall speak you what you are. And, I now declare, that it is not only my pleasure, but command, that you consider Mr. Peat as your destined husband, by which means we shall bring your boasted duty to the test.’ A gentle tremor seized the breast of Miss Shelburne, and the image of Mr. Stevens spontaneously occurred to her imagination; but she was too well acquainted with her father’s disposition, to flatter herself with the most distant hope of winning him from his purpose, she therefore remained silent, pensive, and deeply afflicted. He had the humanity to leave her to her own meditations, for that evening, and her indulgent mother followed his example. She had, however, a female spy upon her motions, to whom Mrs. Shelburne was greatly attached, as she possessed a very agreeable quality.

quality, the art of flattering, and, consequently, pleasing her mistress. This creature, notwithstanding she was an adept in the science of deceit, was touched with unfeigned compassion for her fair distressed prisoner, and secretly wished the young lady would request her to set her at liberty, or, rather, make her the companion of her flight. Her communicative mistress had informed her, that it was in order to prevent her daughter's disposing of herself unworthily, that she was hurried to town with such precipitation; but the girl imagined, that it was merely from their prepossession in favour of Mr. Peat, that miss Lucy's country lover was rejected, and not on account of his circumstances, and concluded, that she should obtain no small reward by making herself instrumental to their happy union. She, therefore, determined to break the way for an explanation, if miss Shelburne neglected applying to her; for which purpose she officiously obtruded herself, on many needless occasions, until miss Shelburne, at length, thinking her troublesome, asked,

asked, if she had orders to interrupt her retirement in the manner she had done for some time? The artful girl begged pardon, in very civil terms, for her seeming impertinence, and said, she hoped the goodness of her intention would atone for her awkward proceedings, for she was so concerned at her master and mistress's harshness and severity, that she was willing to undertake the most difficult attempt to deliver her out of their hands. Miss Shelburne was no less offended, than surprised, at this well intended offer. 'I impute your strange behaviour,' said she, 'to your unacquaintedness with my disposition. I have no need of your assistance, as I have not a wish to fly from my best friends, and beg, as you tender your place, I may not be troubled any more on this subject.' The wench considered this young lady's rejection of her friendly offices, as a want of confidence in her fidelity, and would have exerted the utmost rhetoric she was mistress of, to remove her doubts and suspicions, had not Miss Shelburne, with a displeased

countenance, and resolute accent, forbid her uttering one more syllable, at her peril, commanding her, at the same time, to leave her.

No sooner was she alone, than that prudent pride which had supported her, during the girl's continuance in her apartment, forsook her, and her heart, involuntarily, underwent many soft sensations. 'Alas,' said she, 'how little do we complaining mortals conceive, how infinitely our seemingly most disagreeable things can be aggravated! Before I visited Gloucestershire, I believed myself completely unhappy, because addressed by a man who was highly disgusting to me; but I have returned doubly afflicted, as I now, too sensibly, perceive, I have not only that natural repugnance to struggle with, but a tender inclination for an agreeable object to subdue. Why was Mr. Stevens so engaging? or, rather, why did my heart become so susceptible of his merit? Happily, a frame so weak as mine, will not sustain
such

such violent agitations, but will prove a
seasonable relief, by its dissolution, for all
my sufferings.' In these reflections did
she pass the night, and received an early
summons from her father, to attend him in
his chamber. Her sleepless eye, and pallid
cheek, at first awakened all the parent in
his heart, but he prudently suppressed the
rising tenderness, by fortifying himself with
the recollection of Mr. Peat's wealthy al-
liance; a consideration sufficient to bear
down all opposition.

'Lucy,' said the provident parent, 'it is
amazing that you will, by your disobe-
dience and obstinacy, render the sight of
you offensive to an, hitherto, indulgent
and affectionate father. Which of us, I
beseech you, is to submit, you, or I?
You have, at present, an opportunity of
making me and yourself happy; unless,
indeed, you are so attached to your
beggary lover, as to be unmindful of
every advantage of that good fortune
that now awaits you. I have, long since,
B 5 passed

‘passed my word to my friend, and expect to be enabled to fulfil it. What!’ said he, raising his voice, ‘shall a creature, that owes its existence to me, dare to dispute my will? But I will be calm, and insist upon your positive determination, whether you will, or will not, marry Mr. Peat, on Thursday morning.’ ‘My dear father,’ returned miss Shelburne, ‘only three poor days?’ ‘I think,’ interrupted the parent, ‘the girl’s a natural; who, that could see you at this moment, would suspect any other, than that I was sentencing you for execution? Not a word more,’ continued he, ‘Thursday next is the day. I suppose you mean to favour us with your company, by and by, in the dining-room.’ So saying, he left her, half dead with terror and affliction.

In order to relieve her mind from its extreme depression, she had recourse to her pen; and as Brightley had an allusion to Mr. Stevens, and lady Brightley an immediate

mediate connection with him, she addressed the following lines to that worthy friend:

‘ACCEPT, dear lady Brightley, a
 ‘last farewell, from that unhappy
 ‘Lucy Shelburne you have been pleased to
 ‘honor with your friendship and counte-
 ‘nance. Three short days is all the space
 ‘left between her and destruction. The
 ‘sentence is irrevocably passed, and she
 ‘forbid, by every tie of filial duty, to call
 ‘the judge severe. The most agreeable
 ‘period of her life was spent in converse
 ‘with you; a happiness which she must
 ‘never more enjoy. What a felicity, com-
 ‘pared to her present situation, would it
 ‘have been to her, to have slept the peace-
 ‘ful sleep of the grave, in that humble
 ‘spot of which your ladyship’s closet win-
 ‘dow commands a view! but she is unwill-
 ‘ingly detained, on this argument of life;
 ‘and, notwithstanding her apparent decay,
 ‘Thursday next is allotted for a great
 ‘change in her mortal state. That fatal day
 ‘she is to become, in appearance, a gay,
 B 6 ‘though,

‘ though, in reality, a mourning bride, as
‘ her heart is incapable of that violence her
‘ hand will undergo, nor can be united, by
‘ any human appointment, to the man
‘ chosen for her. One chance she has for
‘ the recovery of her peace, to which she
‘ looks forward with an eye of joyful expect-
‘ tation; that glad period once attained,
‘ and she will be beyond the reach of dis-
‘ appointment, misery, and affliction: her
‘ health will no more be subject to decay,
‘ her mind to fetters. Until that happy
‘ event takes place, she will never cease to
‘ remember her lady Brightley with grati-
‘ tude and affection, nor forget to wish that
‘ felicity to her and her friends, which will
‘ hereafter be incompatible with the breast
‘ of her obliged,

‘ LUCY SHELBURNE.’

She had no sooner thrown these incohe-
rent sentences on paper, than her mind
seemed in part disburdened of its weight;
and, as she was well convinced, that, by
yielding to the present necessity of her cir-
cumstances,

cumstances, she should neither add to, nor diminish, the calamity that threatened her, she determined to comply with her father's humour, in every article, except the decisive one. She, therefore, prepared for appearing at dinner, and, on being informed it was upon table, entered the room, with her letter to lady Brightley, unsealed, in her hand. She was above engaging in any chamber-maid cabals, or lowering herself by an improper confidence; and as her letter might have been intercepted, if she had even attempted a private conveyance of it, and perused by her father, she judged it best to offer it voluntarily to him, not without secret hopes of his declining the acceptance of it. 'I have, sir,' said she, 'just finished this short epistle to lady Brightley, will you please to examine it?' Her frankness had the desired effect; for the sagacious Mr. Shelburne, from a persuasion that the contents must be unexceptionable, by his daughter's conduct, said, he doubted not but it was proper, and permitted her to seal, and dispatch it by a servant then in waiting.

waiting. Mr. Peat was seated at the table, and, on her entrance, his eyes twinkled with uncommon lustre, and the habitual contraction of his brow was somewhat relaxed. His curling eye-brows, once ebony black, though now partly-coloured by age, were in visible neat order, and his hoaty chin had been decently trimmed; his suit was new, spotless, and elegant, and his fringed cravat judiciously displayed; a sparkling gem adorned his withered finger, and he might be allowed to make, for a man of seventy, a very lover-like appearance. Miss Shelburne was so ill a judge as to disregard outside, nor were all the attractions above-mentioned, with her, in the smallest degree, availing. She was concerned to see old age rendered irreverent, by an affectation of youth; and, forgetting his large possessions, thought it a horrid sacrifice to be wedded to one who, in respect of years, might have been her grandfather.

When

When the cloth was removed, Mr. and Mrs. Shelburne withdrew on various pretences, and left the ancient lover to entertain his mistress. Miss Shelburne was in that disposition of mind which properly comes under the denomination of insensible, at least with respect to the objects around her, when a thought of Brightley occurred to her imagination, which contributed to strengthen, rather than abate, her aversion to her antiquated admirer.

After a profound silence, of some minutes continuance, Mr. Peat ventured to declare the great satisfaction miss Shelburne's return gave him, with a complimentary observation on the apparent improvement of her health. 'I confess,' replied the young lady, 'that the Gloucestershire air has had a happy effect upon my constitution, but I have abundant reason to apprehend, that I shall soon lose, in London, the benefit I acquired in that country.' 'Hope for the best, miss,' returned the enamoured banker. 'I have no grounds

‘grounds to flatter myself,’ replied miss Shelburne, hastily, ‘with the preservation of what is intirely dependent upon my peace of mind, now that the sacrifice of that peace is fixed without a prospect of repeal. Oh sir,’ continued she, (yielding to the natural impulse of her heart, unmindful of the disagreeable consequence, should she be unsuccessful) with a most emphatic accent, ‘can you profess a regard for a poor dying creature, yet be accessory to precipitating her, some days before her appointed time, into the last station of mortality? If you would be so generous as to decline all connexion with a being, whose dissolution is near at hand, you would confer an unspeakable obligation on a not ungrateful heart, and render the closing scene of that woman’s life you favour with your esteem and approbation, mentally happy.’ ‘Could I be persuaded,’ returned the banker, ‘that to leave you in your present wild state, would answer the purpose you mention, I certainly would desist; but, miss, I am

‘too well acquainted with your heart, not
‘to be convinced, that a few days would
‘reconcile you to that dutiful considera-
‘tion a short ceremony would intitle me
‘to, from you; especially when you re-
‘flected, that the happiness of your father
‘and mother is hinged upon it, as well as
‘your own future advantage.’ ‘Tell me
‘not of advantage,’ replied the half frantic
miss Shelburne, ‘what charms can worldly
‘advantages have for a creature on the
‘verge of the grave? But, sir,’ added she,
rising, ‘it is unnecessary for you and I to
‘have any farther conversation, as it is
‘now beyond a doubt that we are too well
‘acquainted with each others private sen-
‘timents; your persecution of me will not
‘I find cease, but with my existence, nor
‘will my repugnance to every inter-
‘course with so narrow and selfish a
‘mind as yours, ever be subdued, until
‘that period.’ She then, dropping a
curtsy, hurried to her own apartment, to
reflect, with heart-felt affliction and mor-
tification, on the part she had unwarily
acted, and its unhappy ill success. The
antiquated

antiquated lover was changed almost to petrification, by his mistress's behaviour, and, for some time stood motionless, with his eyes fixed upon that substantial cloud, the door, that eclipsed his Juno. Unfortunately for miss Shelburne, her mother joined Mr. Peat before his consternation had subsided, and (to use her own expression) read her daughter's disobedience in the dissatisfaction of his countenance. 'But, sir,' added she, 'you shall be no more exposed to these disagreeable rebuffs. If you continue willing to receive the perverse creature's hand, on the day appointed, I will engage she shall bestow it, without practicing any more of her romantic and ridiculous fancies.'

'Madam,' returned Mr. Peat, 'I am infinitely indebted to your kindness and civility, it does, indeed, in a considerable degree, compensate the ungenteel treatment I have just met with from your daughter, and I nevertheless profess myself willing to adhere to my primitive engagement,

engagement, of becoming your's, and my friend's son-in-law, provided you can effect it; as I am superior to a breach of contract.' Mrs. Shelburne extolled the generosity of this old lover, and left him, with a resolution of frightening her daughter into a compliance, since every persuasive method had proved ineffectual. With this good purpose of heart, she followed her to her chamber, but found her in a condition that required assistance, instead of the harsh usage she had intended her. This young lady had just been able to reach her apartment before she was seized with a convulsive attack, under the violent operation of which she laboured at her mother's entrance. The shocking change this occasioned in the daughter's countenance, surprised this, otherwise, unfeeling mother, in an uncommon manner, and put her quite off her guard. She ran, wildly, into the counting-house, to her husband, crying aloud, that Lucy was dying! the agonies of death were upon her!

This

This really affectionate, though wrong-headed, father, with distraction in his looks, flew to save and assist, as he now called her, his dear child and *only* comfort. This last expression, though casually dropped, and extorted by the most afflicting apprehensions, was, nevertheless, treasured up in resentful remembrance, by his affronted consort. He no sooner beheld the ravage miss Shelburne's dreadful disorder had made in her fine features, than he became quite outrageous, accused his wife and Mr. Peat of being the cause of this disaster, and execrated his own folly and weakness, in thus sacrificing his darling child to the ill-timed affection of the one, and ambition of the other. His own inclination for accumulating was forgotten at this juncture, and it was some relief, to the compunction he felt, to divide, or rather cast the chief weight of those faulty proceedings, by which this misfortune was derived, upon his wife and partner. He took one of his daughter's hands, which he retained with difficulty, and calling repeatedly upon her, declared

declared, that she had no farther violence to apprehend with respect to Mr. Peat. 'I do, my dear Lucy,' said he, 'disclaim my former intention, nor will I ever again attempt to constrain your inclinations.' However soothing this declaration, miss Shelburne was incapable of experiencing its efficacy. And notwithstanding she had every means imaginable used, for her recovery, she continued in a melancholy condition for two days. Her physician was of opinion, that her face would remain distorted, if she was even restored to her reason, and said her nerves would be rendered so weak and relaxed by the severity of the distemper, as to be liable, on every little surprise and vexation, to a relapse. Mrs. Shelburne's countenance flamed with unperceived heat and resentment, for the slighting speech her husband had let drop, for the first eight and forty hours of her daughter's illness; but when her disorder began to abate, her husband enquired, with unaffected solicitude, into the cause of her discontent, which gave her an opportunity,
not-

notwithstanding her maternal concern and tenderness, to play the froward girl, and, after due acknowledgement on her husband's part, to exert her extreme generosity of disposition, in pardoning an offence unintentional and accidental. So soon as miss Shelburne was revisited with some lucid intervals, her father conjured her to be satisfied, that she had conquered. 'I should despise millions,' said he, 'in competition with my child's life, therefore, my dear Lucy, do not bring me, by the reflection of having been your destruction, with sorrow to the grave.' Miss Shelburne's youth, and the voice of comfort her father imparted, at length subdued her stubborn disorder, and she was advised, by her physician, to visit the South of France, for the re-establishment of her health. Her mother was highly pleased at this proposition, as she well knew that her attendance would be judged necessary, and gadding abroad was the delight of her heart. Mr. Peat, in order to overcome his

his chagrin and disappointment, took a journey into Cornwall, where he had some few relations, and by his absence, removed the greatest impediment to miss Shelburne's satisfaction. A month elapsed before she was able to make lady Brightley acquainted with either her sufferings or felicity, during which time her ladyship and the baronet, together with their worthy neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Finch, endured the most friendly anxiety, on her account. As for Mr. Stevens, he was inconsolable; and concluded, the first intelligence they should receive would be of the death, or more unhappy disposition, of that amiable young lady: but these natural apprehensions were agreeably, as well as unexpectedly, dispelled, by the arrival of the following epistle.

‘IT is once more given to Lucy Shelburne to address her much-esteemed lady Brightley; and, which is no less amazing, she has now the power of imparting, what her vanity inclines her to believe

believe will be, glad tidings, to that
worthy friend. Her father has, happily,
sacrificed the wish of his heart to save his,
otherwise, irrecoverable child from disso-
lution, and continues all tenderness and
indulgence. To the South of France,
my dear lady Brightley, is Lucy Shel-
burne destined, as the only means of re-
covering that health, so lately blasted in
Lombard-street, which she derived from
the Brightley air. Were there a possibi-
lity of meeting at Montpellier, that vene-
rable building, the visiting of which was
the highest satisfaction she enjoyed, in
Glocestershire, she would not hesitate to
undertake the journey. But as, in this
age, miracles are ceased, she would
gladly leave that hospitable dwelling, to
adorn the village it belongs, would but
the inhabitants take up their abode, for
a short space, in a foreign clime. The
lure of friendship is infinitely more attrac-
tive in some hearts than others, or rather
objects are unequally meritorious. Such
an intimation from a lady Brightley,
would

‘ would operate like magic with Lucy
‘ Shelburne, was she at liberty to pursue
‘ her own inclination; but, alas, she de-
‘ spairs of success, even were she to use
‘ strong and pathetic solicitations for such
‘ a happy condescension. This, however,
‘ she must be bold to affirm, that her lady-
‘ ship’s company and conversation would
‘ mitigate her pain, and be of more avail
‘ to her than ten physicians. The honour
‘ of a letter would be highly acceptable,
‘ to her ladyship’s most obliged,

LUCY SHELburnE.

• Lady Brightley had no sooner perused
this epistle, than she communicated the
contents to her son and Mr. Stevens. Sir
William sighed at the mention of a coun-
try he had long, though secretly, wished
to visit, which her ladyship sensibly per-
ceived, but suffered to pass unnoticed,
and in a short time after, retired to her
closet. The baronet and his friend re-
mained silent from, in some degree, similar
reflections. France, indeed, had the larg-

est share of sir William's thoughts, miss Shelburne those of Mr. Stevens. Lady Brightley had carried the affecting consideration of the violence she imposed upon her son, in detaining him in that remote corner of the world, into her retirement. Some concession on her side, her goodness of heart suggested, was now necessary, in return for his steady, and almost unprecedented, compliance, for so many years, with her particularity of humour. She had been abroad in her youth, and was no stranger to the manners, customs, and language of France and Italy, and she was half inclined to conquer her disinclination for travelling, to gratify the newly discovered desire of her son's heart. The more she reflected upon the self-denial he had so long practised, the more she thought it incumbent on her to oblige him in turn, and she was surprised at her, hitherto, insensibility, and inattention in this particular. The opinion of Mr. Finch was always decisive with her ladyship, and she determined to consult him upon the present occasion. This good man heard her ladyship's

ship's declaration with pleasure, and left nothing unsaid to encourage and promote her resolution. 'If my fortune,' said this gentleman, 'was not so limited, and I 'could shake off this incumbrance,' casting an eye upon his wooden stump, 'both 'I and Mrs. Finch would be of your party; 'but though that is impossible, we will, 'in imagination, attend you, in conjunction with our warmest wishes for your 'happiness and entertainment. But, lady 'Brightley,' continued this gentleman, 'I 'have one condition to propose, which I 'hope you will chearfully comply with, 'or I shall repent the disinterested advice I 'have given you. I must not have Brightley 'deserted, except upon this occasion. I 'confess, I am not without apprehensions, 'that when once you have emerged into 'life, this peaceful spot will be forgotten 'by you.' 'I assure you,' returned lady Brightley, smiling, 'your clause is unnecessary, for I am of opinion, I shall sigh 'in secret, from the time of quitting my 'retirement, until I am restored to it, as

is no less natural to me than pleasing. The young gentlemen were far from imagining how materially they were concerned in this consultation, and were most agreeably surpris'd, on her ladyship's communicating her unexpected intention. Sir William's joy was visibly depicted in his countenance, but he found his expressions inadequate to his sensations. Mr. Stevens's satisfaction was allayed by a lurking and powerful apprehension his heart entertain'd, of objections being made to his accompanying sir William, by the friends of miss Shelburne, which, however, proved to be groundless and unnecessary. Lady Brightley dispatched a letter of intelligence to miss Shelburne, of the resolution she had taken, and begged an immediate answer, to inform her, they should join company before the commencement of their journey, or their meeting to be deferred until their arrival in the French dominions.

This letter, the transported miss Shelburne put into the hands of her father, and

and intreated his speedy determination.

“You see the honour, sir,” said she, “lady

“Brightley offers me, of taking me under

“her protection; can you, my dear sir,

“have any objection?” “Not in the least,

“my child,” returned this softened parent,

“her ladyship will, I hope, contribute to

“keep up your spirits, by which means

“alone you will be able to perform this

“necessary journey.” Mrs. Shelburne was

too deeply engaged by preparations of

gewgaws and finery, in order to her mak-

ing an elegant figure in a French assembly,

to attend to any other particulars, and her

dislike to Mr. Stevens was intirely forgot-

ten by her, insomuch that his company

became perfectly eligible in her sight, from

the consideration of the necessity she might

be reduced to in a strange country, if she

had not a polite, well-bred young fellow,

to squire her to publick places.

Whilst the trifling preliminaries were adjusting in Lombard-street, lady Brightley's mind underwent some repugnant pangs, as

the time of their departure from her ancient abode approached, and had she not been supported by Mr. Finch, her resolves had ended in her son's disappointment. Mr. Shelburne was so solicitous to promote his daughter's happiness, to prevent the misfortune of becoming childless, that he wrote a letter of polite invitation to lady Brightley, to make his house her home, during her continuance in London, which her ladyship as politely declined, as a lodging, for the few days she proposed staying, was far more agreeable to her, from an incurable aversion she had conceived for his wife.

The parting between Mrs. Finch and her ladyship, was very affecting, nor did the melancholy of the last wear off for many miles, but her consideration for her son's repose, at last dispelled the chagrin she had contracted, and she became herself again. They, in due time, arrived safe in London, without any remarkable adventure or occurrence, and miss Shelburne

burne was soon convinced, that the presence of Mr. Stevens was as essential a restorative to her peace of mind and tranquility, as the air of Montpelier could possibly be for her bodily health. They embarked with a favourable wind at Dover, and were shortly wafted to the Gallic shore, where we will leave them to pursue their journey, and once more revisit the forlorn inhabitants of Brightley.

As Mrs. Slaughter and Mrs. Finch were not upon neighbourly terms, the time hung heavy, with the last-mentioned lady and her husband, for some short period, after lady Brightley's departure. Mr. Stapleton would often look in upon them, and lament the young gentleman's loss, as he was the only youth he could have wished to bestow his Caroline and fortune upon. Mr. Finch flattered him that he might return with a disengaged heart, and, undoubtedly, would receive no small improvement from an extensive observation of men and things. But the old man would shake his head, and say,

C. 4.

say, he was sufficiently accomplished for his girl, if this foreign jaunt had been omitted, and that he feared he should never live to see him return, but he would add, upon this occasion, ‘ I hope you will
‘ give me leave, in such a case, to recom-
‘ mend the poor girl to your care, and
‘ that I may depend upon your friendly
‘ endeavours to promote this desire of my
‘ heart, if agreeable to all parties. Mr. Finch promised with a sincere intention of performing, to espouse the young lady’s cause, as he believed he should, by such a procedure, oblige lady Brightley, and be instrumental to the young people’s felicity.

Miss Fortescue, as her shyness wore off, became very agreeable company, and after one fortnight had elapsed of constant visiting, at Mr. Finch’s, she supplied, by her innocent conversation and vivacity, in a great degree, the loss they had sustained of their much valued friends. During this period of tranquility, the old gentleman

man was taken off by a decay of nature, and poor miss Fortescue left, until the age of twenty-one, intirely dependant upon her avaritious father.

This was far from Mr. Stapleton's intention, in the latter part of his life, but he had postponed the alteration of his will, until he was deprived of the capacity of doing it; a proof of the folly and impropriety of procrastination in such an important affair. Mr. Finch acquainted Mr. Fortescue, by letter, of his father-in-law's decease, who received the news with gladness; and, in order to avoid expence, begged the favour of Mr. Finch to give directions for his decent interment at Brightley, pleading business as an excuse for his non-attendance. As to Caroline, he said, he left it in her own option either to return immediately to London, or finish the summer in the country. The latter of which alternatives was her choice.

Mr. Stapleton's funeral was no sooner over, than Mr. Finch's house was more properly Miss Fortescue's home, than farmer Johnson's, as Mrs. Finch was unhappy without the prattle of Miss Fortescue, Miss Fortescue, if without the company and indulgence of Mrs. Finch: they had, moreover, frequent entertaining epistles from Lady Brightley and Mr. Stevens, which contributed to their general amusement and satisfaction.

A prevailing report was conveyed in a friendly epistle, to Mr. and Mrs. Finch, that the regiment would soon be recalled home, to which their son belonged; this intelligence was highly grateful to them, as it flattered them with the pleasing expectation of once more beholding the darling of their hearts, who had now attained his twentieth year.

A letter soon reached them from this worthy young man, which put their hopes upon a certainty, and rendered them in-

con-

conceivably happy. It was not many months before this youthful commander made his appearance at Brightley, and, at once captivated the inclinations of the inexperienced miss Fortescue. Had his laced coat and shoulder-knot been the only attractions, her youth and innocence would have sufficiently excused her weakness, as, even those trifles, frequently recommend the fool, the fop and libertine, to favour. But her heart was engaged by a person inexpressibly graceful, an uncommon polite and pleasing address, and a generous, great and amiable mind. He observed her with a tender regard, but, on being informed of the large fortune she was intitled to, endeavoured to reduce his consideration of her to the limits of friendship only, his prudence forbidding him to aspire so high as eighty thousand pounds. The fair miss Caroline, unconscious of that consequence she derived from fortune's favour, was all lovely humility, nor did one ambitious wish obtrude, except when the image of the handsome captain stole

upon her imagination. It was, in her opinion, the highest ambition to expect his approbation, as what he could approve must be little inferior to perfection. He was a stranger to vanity and affectation, and though it might with truth be said, simplicity and modesty, were all her arts, and beauty all her arms; yet the man of war was discomfited, and, notwithstanding he had escaped wounding in the field, he was unequal to the united force of unassisted nature and genuine truth.

The good humoured Mr. Finch, and his amiable partner, enjoyed reciprocal satisfaction from beholding the object of their united affections, mature in every valuable accomplishment. He would frequently mention, with a friendly warmth, the merit of the young baronet, and the great qualities and abilities of his friend, and regret their absence. At one of these junctures he unfortunately communicated the engagement he was under to promote, and the ardent wish he entertained to effect, an union, between
miss

miss Fortescue and the heir of Brightley. The young lady speaking, exchanged a look with the captain, whose eyes involuntarily met the innocent fair one's, whilst his father made the above wounding declaration. In vain did he endeavour to suppress the anguish of his heart, and was too late convinced, how feeble is reason's aid, when summoned, not to prevent, but to erase, a tender impression. The remaining part of the evening became tedious, the conversation distasteful, and the hour of retirement, in his imagination, advanced by heavy, slow degrees. Every faculty of his soul was suspended, or, rather, engrossed, by one object; his eye beheld nought but miss Fortescue, his ear could admit no other sound than her voice. His attention, his reflection, his every thought, however directed, or, at first employed, returned to the contemplation of her alone, in spite of all his efforts to the contrary. When he had attained that solitary state he had for some hours desired, instead of finding the relief he expected, his dejection was infinitely

nitely aggravated and increased. 'Surely,' said he, 'I visited this spot in an evil hour. Who would have imagined that I, that have passed much time in the greatest cities on the continent, and beheld a variety of agreeable women with unshaken indifference, or, at least, without particular consideration, should be reserved for the fate I now experience? The object that has engaged my attachment is, indubitably, amiable, but allotted, by a dying parent, for a happier youth, whose interest is espoused by my own revered father. It is best for me to make an honourable retreat, and endeavour to lose, in the duties of my profession, a remembrance of this too lovely miss Fortescue. I will write, to-morrow, to my colonel, and desire him to summons me immediately to town, by which step, alone, I shall be enabled to be just to the lady, my father, and my own character.' The next day after this heroic resolution, he had an unexpected opportunity of entertaining miss Fortescue, apart from all other company.

pany. This young lady had passed the preceding night at his father's, and had occasion to go to farmer Johnson's so soon as she had breakfasted. This was the very morning Mr. Finch had intended to dedicate to writing to his colonel for the purpose abovementioned; but, on his father's proposing his attendance on the young lady, his resolutions and intentions were totally forgotten; and, notwithstanding he was, most unquestionably, intitled to the reputation of an obedient and dutiful son, yet it would have been evident, to the most common observer, that he was particularly so on this occasion. The young lady accepted his company, without the affected parade of opposition, acknowledging herself obliged to him, without attempting an apology for giving him the trouble. Her little heart was replete with satisfaction, which she had not the least notion of concealing. Mr. Finch perceived, or imagined he perceived, this encouraging approbation, and felt an unusual self-consequence. When they had got clear of his father's house

house and garden, they came within view of Brightley-hall, at the sight of which a recollection occurred to the warrior, which gave rise to a sigh that escaped unperceived. 'You were accustomed, I understand, miss Fortescue,' said this young gentleman, with an emotion he endeavoured to suppress, 'to visit, very frequently, at that antique dwelling.' 'I assure you, sir, returned the young lady, 'you have been 'misinformed, for I never yet have beheld 'the inside of that habitation.' 'You astonish me,' reply'd the captain, pleasure glowing on his cheek, but the remembrance of his father's declaration coming across him, he added, with altered looks and accent, 'you were intimate with lady 'Brightley, and the young baronet, notwithstanding?' 'I had the pleasure of seeing the lady and gentleman you mention,' replied miss Fortescue, 'the first day I arrived at Brightley, at your father's.' 'And at no other time?' interrogated Mr. Finch. 'No other, upon my honor,' returned the innocent girl. 'But why,' added she,

she, 'should you suspect the contrary?' 'Miss Fortescue,' replied Mr. Finch, 'I sincerely beg your pardon for my impertinence; though did you know my motives, for being thus inquisitive, I fear you would not be inclined to pardon me.' 'Bless me,' said Miss Fortescue, 'what can you mean? you will really, sir, make me uneasy, unless you explain yourself.' 'O Miss Fortescue,' said Mr. Finch, 'this is a string I ought not to have touched upon. I should, from many considerations, have restrained my curiosity, as your fortune places you no less beyond my reach, than my father's intention, with respect to the happy baronet. Yet I will presume to declare, that Sir William Brightley cannot be more sensible of your merit, and innate perfections than I am, though prosperity, and the attainment of your affections, will be the lot of the one, narrow circumstances, and the keen mortification of losing what he must ever esteem, the portion of the other.' An inbred modesty, sealed the lips of this uninstructed

instructed innocent, and restrained her from acknowledging the favourable sentiments she entertained for the man before her, or betraying the gentle compassion his expressions had excited in her tender breast. The artless blush that adorned her cheek, alone spoke encouragement, and her lover began to conceive, from the soft confusion his declaration had apparently occasioned, in her undiffembling heart, that he was by no means indifferent to her. ‘Had I been born a baronet,’ resumed the young gentleman, ‘or was my paternal inheritance, ought besides the valuable reflection of my parent’s virtues, perhaps, my pretensions would not be discounted by miss Fortescue’s friends, but an alliance will, undoubtedly, be sought for her, suitable in dignity to those expectations, her large possessions intitle her to; nor would the poor pretender escape the brow-beatings of the wealthy, however sincere his affection, however unexceptionable his origin.’ ‘Alas,’ said the gentle miss Fortescue, with a look of sweet

sweet perplexity, ' the favours of fortune
' but expose the possessor to calamities un-
' known to the peaceful indigent: for
' surely, a greater cannot be found in the
' catalogue of human ills, than a disunion
' of hearts and sentiments, in those beings
' whose lives are cast in one inevitable lot.
' The felicity I have experienced in the
' company and conversation of your good
' mother, has its source in the similitude of
' our dispositions, her wishes, her inclina-
' tions, so perfectly coincide with mine,
' that in complying with her humour, I
' entirely follow my own: I can, from that
' single instance, form a too sensible judg-
' ment of the unhappiness an ingenuous
' mind must endure in an opposite state,
' where every concession would be confi-
' dered as a violence, every compliance re-
' pugnant to the will. I tremble but to
' think how my peace would be wounded,
' was I compelled to dwell even with your
' mother under such disagreeable circum-
' stances.'

Farmer

Farmer Johnson, having taken his rounds amongst his labourers in the field, was returning home, through a path adjoining to that the lovers had taken, and which was divided only by a hedge of hawthorn; a voice unexpectedly saluting his ear, he stopped, and looked on every side in order to discover whence it proceeded. The ornamental part of the captain's coat glittering with uncommon lustre, the sun-beams darting directly upon it, soon attracted his observation; and the silly lout, by making himself unseasonably visible, became a mortifying interruption to their conversation.

‘O miss,’ said the honest farmer, ‘I had a letter from London, yesterday, from your father, mighty full of questions concerning your health and happiness, he’s a good gentleman I’ll be answerable, and a loving father, for he says, he can no longer live without you, and begs the favour, that is his honor’s humble word to me, to see you safe to that great place which I never did see in all my born days, but shall, to serve you, go to it now in my old age.’

This

This news was equally unwelcome to this gentle pair, but as the farmer continued plodding on only a few paces before them, Mr. Finch was too prudent to mention the concern he felt, lest he should not only betray the secret of his heart to his neighbour, but have it betrayed to more important ears. He indulged the pleasing thought, as they moved on in silent meditation, that miss Fortescue would be removed by this summons of her father, at an equal distance from the baronet as himself, and his own father released from the obligation of promoting the cause of that tremendous youth, as the lady would then be under the immediate direction and disposition of a superior power. On their arrival at the house of Mr. Johnson, miss impatiently ran over the contents of her letter, and found, by her father's importunity, that her stay in Gloucestershire must be short. There was no opposing this dire command, notwithstanding the severe constraint her compliance with it, would lay upon her inclination. Some
tears

tears involuntarily forced their passage, which she placed to Mrs. Finch's account; as a separation from her would be a stroke she said she was unable to sustain. 'Better had it been for me,' said she, 'never to have experienced her almost maternal indulgence, than to be so suddenly torn from it for ever. To the care of my father's house-keeper shall I again be committed, who is far from having the natural feelings of tenderness. She is unqualified for every task, but domestic drudgery, both by the servility of her disposition, and want of education, yet she must be my constant, my only companion, and supply to the sensible, the well-bred, and engaging characters, your mother invariably fills with dignity and ease. To what purpose has my mind been enlarged, but like the knowledge imparted to the first female, by the fatal forbidden apple, to perceive my own ignorance, and the insufficiency of that woman's capacity, with whom I must ever dwell?'

'And

‘And must miss Fortescue,’ said Mr. Finch, ‘hereafter become inaccessible to all her friends? when I rejoin my corps, whose quarters are not far from London, must I never presume to enquire after her health? My visits, perhaps, would offend, as their motive could not be long concealed from the penetration of Mr. Fortescue. My tender solicitude would betray me; nor could I preserve the cool behaviour of a common acquaintance, glowing as my heart now does, with affectionate respect. Instruct me, dear miss Caroline, to bear this evil with fortitude, and hard though the lesson will be if you will, condescend to be my teacher, I will not only love but adopt your precepts.’

‘I, sir, am but ill qualified for instruction,’ sighed the lovely miss Caroline, ‘especially where submission and resignation are wanting. They are virtues I can hardly boast in common with my species, and confess that I never more,
‘than

‘than on the present occasion, stood in
‘need of their support. Your mother, your
‘valuable mother, sir, recurs continually
‘upon my mind, and convinces me, that I
‘am both a weak and a frail being, un-
‘equal to trials, unequal to misfortune.
‘But if you please, we will dwell no long-
‘er on such disagreeable themes.’ ‘I am
‘not,’ said Mr. Finch, ‘so far master of
‘myself, as to forbear making a per-
‘haps ungenerous use of the happy op-
‘portunity now given me, of learning my
‘destiny. I am impelled by that uncon-
‘querable affection, by which my heart is
‘informed, to intreat you to tell me, what
‘my future expectations must be. I am
‘above the mean, contemptible artifice,
‘of engaging you into any other connec-
‘tion with my present circumstances, than
‘just giving me hope; if I could but flatter
‘myself that I am not disagreeable to you,
‘my greatest, my most dreadful difficulty,
‘would be surmounted.’ ‘If that satisfac-
‘tion will secure your peace,’ returned
the innocent maid, ‘be assured, that you
‘are

‘are far, very far, from being disliked by
‘me.’ ‘Think me not encroaching, my
‘dear miss Fortescue,’ said the captain,
‘only add, that I have nothing to appre-
‘hend on sir William Brightley’s account,
‘and I will presume no farther.’ ‘My
‘knowledge,’ replied miss Fortescue, ‘of
‘that gentleman, is insufficient to bias me
‘in his favour; nor do I believe he could
‘have obtained my approbation, by even
‘the most uninterrupted assiduity. I shall
‘never, in all probability, behold him more,
‘nor do I wish so to do.’ ‘It is enough,’
said Mr. Finch, I will be satisfied with
‘your unprecedented goodness, and flatter
‘myself, that you will be reduced, thereby,
‘to bestow a kind thought, upon a man
‘who will never cease to remember you
‘in the most respectful manner.’

They were now within sight of Mr.
Finch’s habitation, and perceived the be-
nevolent master watching their return.
Miss Fortescue burst into tears, upon en-
tering the parlour, to the astonishment and
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concern of those good friends, who besought her, tenderly, to inform them, to what cause they should ascribe her uneasiness. ‘I am almost ashamed, my dear madam,’ said miss Caroline, ‘to confess, that it is owing to a summons I have received from my father to return immediately to London. It has, certainly, an unnatural appearance, to even wish to remain from under his protection and countenance, but you, I know, would excuse me, if you could conceive the life of obscurity and solitude, to which I shall be consigned, notwithstanding my abode will be in the great metropolis.’

Mrs. Finch was sincerely affected by this intelligence, and, for the first time, was heard to complain. ‘Our satisfactions, my dear,’ said she, addressing her husband, ‘I think have of late, dropped off in quick successions, and when our Frank is obliged to leave us, this village, which a few months ago, could boast a polite and
ami-

‘amicable society,’ will become an almost dreary uninhabited waste, and our amusements will, I fear, lose their former power of pleasing.’ ‘You are a wicked murmurer,’ replied Mr. Finch, smiling, ‘for have we not yet an amiable pair left amongst us? As for this good child,’ continued he, ‘I am only surprised we have so long enjoyed her company, and hope she will have no reason to regret a change of situation, which she might hourly expect. I have a notion, her father begins to think her marriageable, and has got some swain in his eye. What say you, Caroline, are you willing to obey your father’s command in such a case?’ ‘I hope sir,’ returned miss Fortescue, ‘my father will not require an implicit obedience from me, but condescend, in some measure, to consult my inclinations, in an affair of such importance.’ ‘Heyday,’ replied Mr. Finch, ‘what new fangled notions are these? What, would a girl in hanging-sleeves, be consulted in the choice of a husband?’ ‘Sir,’ return-

ed miss Fortescue, with some warmth, 'if
' I am too young to chuse, I am too young
' to be chosen; that is a maxim I have ever
' adopted, and will ever maintain.' 'O
' brave,' said the jocular Mr. Finch, 'you
' will certainly run festive on your father's
' hands, he had better commit you to my
' management.' By such kind of good
humoured methods, did this worthy man
endeavour to divert his wife and her little
friend, but without success; the traces of
sorrow were visible in each of their coun-
tenances, and deep furrows were made in
the young captain's heart.

The time of her departure approached
apace, and the farmer made his appearance
mounted and belted, as on a former occa-
sion, for her conveyance to meet the
stage, before she could prevail upon her-
self to make any preparation. Her clothes
were then packed up in haste, and the last
adieu spoken in broken and precipitate ac-
cents. The lover attended his mistress to
the inn, and waited the arrival of that
coach

coach which was to convey her from his sight, perhaps for ever, with an agitated heart, and put her into it, with an affliction too big for utterance. He stood upon an eminence until even the cloud of dust was dispersed that the carriage raised, and then returned with a solemn dejected pace, unaccompanied, save by a simple plough-boy, unto the house of his father. Mr. Finch soon perceived that his son was caught by his little favourite, and secretly rejoiced, from that observation, at her removal. He considered her as superior in fortune to whatever a child of his could expect, and was far from imagining, that she had made so deep an impression upon his naturally gay volatile disposition, as she had in reality done.

Mr. Fortescue received her with kindness, and joined with Rebecca, in acknowledging, that she was much improved. 'Caroline,' said he, 'I shall to-morrow have company to dinner, I therefore charge you to dress to the best advantage,

'tage, as they are at present, strangers
'to you.'

The apartment allotted for this young lady was in partnership with Mrs. Rebecca, which was an extreme mortification to miss Fortescue, as she was sensible she would not only prove a spy upon her actions, but interrupt, by her impertinent and unmeaning chat, many an agreeable reflection she should wish to indulge.

No sooner did the light dawn in upon this indefatigable domestic, than she arose to prepare, for the grand entertainment, her master had ordered, and which was submitted to her direction and management, without controul. At eight o'clock she disturbed her young lady, notwithstanding the fatigue of her journey, to assist her in, or at least, be a spectator of, her notable performance. The kitchen was the place appointed for her breakfasting, in which repast Mrs. Rebecca was a participater. The old farmer was gone out, under the
conduct

conduct of a raw lad, her father's foot-boy, to see the Monument and the Lions, the only things, he said, he had any curiosity about. Down sat this young lady with great dissatisfaction, to the ordinary table, provided for the occasion, and was supplied with ordinary tea, and butter of the rankest kind. Her palate had long been disused to such unpleasant flavours, nor would her tender stomach digest the unwholesome food. Her heart underwent the severest pangs, at this prospect of wretchedness, nor did she conceive it possible she could ever again be inured to it. She was not unmindful of her father's commands, with respect to her personal adornment, and made, as she was wont, a very pretty, elegant appearance. At two o'clock, the rap of consequence denoted the arrival of the grand visitants, which proved to be an elderly lame gentleman, his lady, a masculine, morose, haughty looking woman, a young flirting, plain girl, his daughter, and a fribblish youth of eighteen or twenty, his son and heir. Mr.

tescuc's wig of eminence adorned his brows, which seldom saw the light but on dark occasions in Westminster-hall. He received his very good friends with the air of a courtier, and taking his daughter by the hand, presented her to them severally, under the appellation of the girl he had mentioned. Mrs. Macpherson, the name of this family of noble and ancient descent in the North, said, the young lady had too much of the peasant in her countenance, but possibly that might wear off, by a few months continuance in the town air. Miss cast abundance of superstitious glances at her, but did not condescend to honor her by a verbal notice. The youth, stared at her with the confidence of a barn-bailiff, and the old gentleman gave her, once in the whole visit, a significant nod. Miss Fortescue, was vastly puzzled to what cause to impute their strange behaviour, but she was obliged to trust to time for the unraveling of these unaccountable proceedings, as Rebecca was as close as the grave, and miss's spirit above applying to

to her for information. The next morning the same old gentleman ambled to breakfast, with her father, and was shut up several hours with him in private conference. The result of which will be communicated to the reader in due season.

During these transactions, the travellers enjoyed, in the gay scenes of Paris, a continual succession of pleasing amusements. The airy politeness, the parade of compliment, and the propensity to gallantry, and uninterrupted mirth, that prevailed amongst this volatile, light-fed people, pleased Mrs. Shelburne beyond expression. She entered into the spirit of the country, and, because the natives were unreserved, she threw off all restraint, and painted, patched, and coquetted with the best of them. Miss Shelburne was frequently hurt by her mother's imprudent sallies, both in conversation and conduct, but the invariable ease, decorum, and complaisant disposition of lady Brightley, supported her under, and by degrees dispelled, the chagrin

her mother's behaviour occasioned her. Sir William, under the discreet eye and well-judged direction and influence of Mr. Stevens, preserved his manners untainted, his integrity uncorrupted. The fair in vain strove to allure him, he being no less disgusted by their forward levity, than by their borrowed complexions. No native innocence, no gentle timidity informed a French mind; the girls, in hanging sleeves, were expert in coquetry, and, far read in romance, their tongues could speak a language foreign to their hearts, and their eye sparkle with unbecoming meaning. The double entendre, so much the taste of that nation, was a species of wit the baronet could never comprehend, and was incapable of fancying it either bright, or consistent with good breeding. Adultery, though dignified with the splendid appellations of gallantry, intrigue and amour, was still, in his opinion, the same atrocious crime, understood in England, by the plain epithet of dishonouring the wife of your neighbour, and wounding him in the

the nicest, tenderest points, his fame, and his peace. The favours of the unshakled fair, if wantons, were odious and disgusting to him; if retaining the character of chastity however encouraging their advances, he held the taking advantage of them, as highly criminal, and promised himself never to have the sin of seduction to answer for. Their ceremony was troublesome to him, and their insincerity despicable. In short, he blessed himself each morning, that he was born an Englishman, and the same remembrance, each evening, filled his heart with thankfulness.

Mrs. Shelburne's ear, so long refused to the voice of that irresistible charmer, flattery, drank in rich draughts from the rising until the setting sun. Monsieur Friseur her hair-dresser, and monsieur Cou-teau her nail-pairer, were so well skilled in this pleasing art, that they successively recommended themselves to her favourable consideration. The hours of their attend-

ance became the most grateful to her in the whole twenty-four, and she received their devoirs and adulation with more pleasure than her daily bread. They separately congratulated themselves on their *bon-adresse*, and doubted not but they were in the high road to receiving not only personal, but pecuniary, favours, from this unpolished illiterate Englishwoman. She enjoyed the happiness of being admired, for a long time, unsuspected, by her daughter, and the rest of the party, and without the privacy of any one, save the pliant handmaid, whose friendly offers miss Shelburne's prudence rejected, though in the greatest extremity.

It happened, most unfortunately, one morning, that Mrs. Shelburne, intending to favour each with a private interview, as usual, for want of due attention in the hour of appointment, Mr. Friseur was surprised by his competitor at the feet of his languishing beauty, offering up the grateful incense of flattery to this benignant deity.

deity. The prostrate lover arose, and darted a revengeful glance at the unseasonable intruder, who, returning it in kind, an altercation succeeded, which rising very high, at length alarmed lady Brightley, miss Shelburne, and the young gentlemen, who instantly repaired to the scene of action. Weapons they had none, either offensive or defensive, except those occupied in their several professions, which they had handled, during their verbal fray, with so much dexterity, that, before the young gentlemen could interpose, the room was bestrewed with the foretops, bags, and mercury-wings of the furious opponents. The appearance of so many genteel persons, disconcerted the combatants, and instantaneously cooled their courage, they picked up their dispoiled ornaments, and endeavoured to make a retreat *a la mode de François*, but sir William, with a politeness truly English, presumed to detain these gentlemen, in order to be informed of the merits of their proceedings; but finding, on enquiry, how little their examination would

would redound to the honor of Mrs. Shelburne, and in order to spare miss as much mortification as possible, he rang for a servant to shew them the door, a grace he thought beneath the dignity of his own character. This adventure, as it could not be concealed, induced them to leave Paris abruptly, to avoid the ridicule, one woman's folly and indiscretion would draw upon them all. Mrs. Shelburne was sufficiently punished by this step, and remained fullen during a whole two days journey.

Regular hours, light regimen, and in general, hearts ease, contributed to restore to health and chearfulness, the delicate miss Lucy Shelburne, whose mind was no less tender than her constitution. Mr. Stevens enjoyed the satisfaction of her conversation, without restraint, and was her constant companion, when confined by indisposition, disinclination for visiting, or over fatigue. Friendship, in the most disinterested and extensive sense, they scrupled
not

not to acknowledge for each other, but disclaimed the power of the blind, but unerring archer; notwithstanding this self-deceit, their hearts were irreparably transfixed by the keenest arrow in his quiver.

After our little company had visited several provinces of note, subject to the Grande Monarque, they took the route to Italy; where sir William was as much dissatisfied at the inaccessibleness of the fair Italians, as he had been disgusted, by the other extreme, in their neighbours the French. The love of his own country was still predominant, and the customs thereof revered by him. ‘There, only, Stevens,’ he would say, ‘is mediocrity practised; there, only, is a proper intercourse of the species; our females are as free from Gallic folly and levity, as they deservedly enjoy an exemption from Italic restraint. How finely are our laws calculated for their advantage, as well as ours! their grievances redressed, and their liberty un-
infringed! The parent does not assume the

' the unnatural authority of hurrying their
 ' children to a wretched nunnery, to waste
 ' that existence, undesired by their off-
 ' spring, and conferred upon them, with-
 ' out their consent, merely to prevent the
 ' reduction of the family estate by too
 ' many heirs, and perpetuate the illustrious
 ' folly of an airy marquis or comte. My
 ' heart,' he would add, ' still retains its fa-
 ' vourable impression of your sister, nor shall
 ' she be long unvisited, when I return to my
 ' endeared native soil. Our annals would
 ' have been unfurnished with many noble
 ' pages, had we adopted the salique law,
 ' as then no Elizabeth would have graced
 ' the English throne.'

They made a longer stay at Rome and Ve-
 nice, than at any other capitol; the baronet
 being particularly critical in his observations
 on the antiquities of the one, and the beau-
 ties of the other. The churches, the ruinous
 structures, the almost animated perform-
 ances of the several masters in sculpture, and
 the inimitable paintings of a Raphael, a
 Titian, a Guido, and other incomparable
 artists,

artists, alternately engaged his intense admiration; nor did men, manners, and the peculiar polity of each constitution escape him. He was usually quick in his perception of the justice, as of the illegality of many of their established maxims; but despotism was ever irreconcilable with his sentiments and approbation. Can it be agreeable to equity, he would say, that a prince, however weak, tyrannic, or inhuman, should be invested with authority over, not only the property, but lives of his subjects? Shall a man become obnoxious, merely from opulence or popularity, to his displeasure? Shall his life be exposed to the hazard and continual apprehensions of being torn from his family, imprisoned and tortured, even to death, to gratify the malice, ambition or avarice, of that sovereign, who is bound by every tie of candour and honour, to be his protector? If a king is to be considered as the father of his people, is not the destruction of his children, an action no less repugnant to nature than humanity? The slave in the
mine

mine has this advantage of the slave dignified by titles, that his estate is incapable of reduction, and, by being concealed from the eye, he has a chance to escape the persecution and malevolence of his prince. No courts are open here for redress of injuries, no bold complaints of deprivation of property can here be preferred, no relief obtained from oppression's hand. On these occasions he always concluded with this apostrophe; O England! Happy, peaceful port! The seat of justice, liberty, and happiness! The peasant there can call his cott his own, and the man of large possessions, pass his days in ease, nor apprehend the mark of prey being fixed upon him, for only appearing to enjoy the inheritance of his father.

During their continuance in this part of the world, Mrs. Shelburne remained dissatisfied and unentertained. She would have applied to her husband to recall his daughter, had she not been reduced to some kind of docility and awe by her French adventure.

ture. She was too well acquainted with her husband's disposition, not to be certain, that such a tale would be grating to his ears, and, therefore, endeavoured, to the best of her ability, to make a virtue of necessity, and wear a smile upon her face, notwithstanding her mortified heart. They proposed returning by the Hague, miss Shelburne having a desire to see that eminent village. Lady Brightley was far from repenting the step she had taken to oblige her son, as every day gave her some fresh proof of his strength of judgment, goodness of heart, and filial tenderness. The beauties of his character had, like the rose of the desert, been perpetually obscured, if he had continued confined alone to his native clime. There he would have had no opportunity of displaying those innate virtues he possessed, of delicacy, honour, and steadiness, in the practice of which he was uniform and invariable, as the allurements of vice would not have been so unlimited and powerful, as rendered by example, nor

evil

evil temptations so manifold, and almost inevitable.

Brightley-hall was frequently mentioned by him, with pleasure and approbation. Nor was the remembrance, that his travels were to terminate in that little village, in the smallest degree, either mortifying or painful to him. Such a companion as Mr. Finch he had not found in a foreigner, of any denomination; nor so valuable a female as the wife of that amiable friend. He promised himself infinite satisfaction, in comparing his own remarks with that worthy gentleman's; as also, having his prejudices removed, and the impropriety of his sentiments corrected, by a judgment no less clear and impartial, than candid and humane.

On this friendly party's arrival at the Hague, they were met by an English packet, replete with news of consequence to, at least, one member of their community. Mr. Stevens was agreeably surprised with
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the following letter from his mother, inclosed in a cover to lady Brightley.

Dear Frank,

IF I could consider riches as the reward of the just, notwithstanding they are diffused, by the all-wise distributor, indiscriminately on all men; I should invite you to return, to receive the recompence of your filial piety, and patient resignation to the dispensations of providence. Your grandfather, my child, is no more, and has been profuse in his provision for your sister and you, in his last moments, though he so long denied you a bare subsistence before. It is impossible for me to tell you the large possessions you may now call your own, as the plate and jewels you are intitled to are of an immense value. The estate bequeathed you is three thousand pounds a year, and, to your sister, eighteen thousand pounds. I flatter myself that I shall have the happiness to find my children as far from a blameable elation in their prosperity, as they have happily

'pily avoided all depression, and unworthy
 'murmuring, in adversity. Affluence is no
 'less a state of tryal, than contracted cir-
 'cumstances, and the temptations to evil
 'are more numerous in the former, than
 'the latter; as luxury and ease are, fre-
 'quently, the bane of youthful hearts. It
 'is in your own power, by a properly bear-
 'ing and employing the unexpected blef-
 'sings that are now dealt out to you, to
 'confirm, or obliterate, the remembrance
 'of your former virtues, and rejoice your
 'mother's heart, with a satisfaction, neither
 'sickness nor misfortune can deprive her
 'of. I am, my dear son, with due respects
 'to the worthy family to whom I acknow-
 'ledge perpetual obligations and esteem,

'Your affectionate mother,

'M. STEVENS.'

Mr. Stevens's countenance plainly indi-
 cated the pleasure he derived from the con-
 tents of his mother's letter, insomuch, that
 the obliging lady Brightley said, she pre-
 sumed

sumed she might give him joy of some extraordinary pleasing event. 'I acknowledge,' replied Mr. Stevens, 'I have cause to rejoice, and have a just sense of your ladyship's grateful congratulations, but must beg to be excused communicating the news I have received, at this juncture. It is the first indulgence of so strange, and, in appearance, absurd, a nature, I have ever wished to be granted me; but I will, hereafter, convince my friends, that reason, not caprice, suggested this particular inclination.' 'We are,' returned lady Brightley, looking round, 'I dare believe all of us exempt from impertinent curiosity, and, therefore, willingly (I take upon me to be the voice of the company) tolerate you in your present humour, on condition that we are, one day, permitted to share your happiness, by a friendly sympathy.' Mr. Stevens bowed, with a grateful heart, and withdrew, in order to recollect himself, his ideas having undergone a total dissipation by his surprise and joy. The adverse strokes of fortune can be supported even
by

by the greatest minds, with more propriety and decorum than the reverse, as we are by the latter thrown off our guard, and have so many dormant passions awakened, which impel us to betray the weak side of our characters, and require the utmost circumspection to discover, through the thick shade of vanity and self-love, by which they are surrounded, as well as resolution to restrain them, within proper bounds, and is undoubtedly the most difficult task of human nature.

Mr. Stevens had a check upon his transports, though it had no other foundation than in his imagination, as it was not in the power of fortune to give him felicity, unless in participation with miss Shelburne.

In all the private interviews he had enjoyed with that young lady, he had never made her acquainted with his sentiments. Honor and poverty had kept him silent, but now that he was, by a change of circumstance, authorized, as it were, to declare

declare his affection freely, the diffidence and doubts inseparable from a pure and disinterested passion, took possession of his heart. Should she dislike him, should he be refused, were apprehensions that obtruded themselves; and it was some time before he could compose these several agitations.

The remembrance of sir William's prejudice, with respect to his sister, was not forgotten by him; and he, at last, determined to engage Mr. Finch's assistance in carrying a scheme against the baronet's heart into execution. Her family was by no means inferior to that young gentleman's, and miss Stevens was, by her grandfather's generosity, rendered somewhat worthy of him in point of fortune; he, therefore, wrote to Mr. Finch, and, after informing him of his grandfather's death, introduced sir William's whimsical attachment to his sister, and begged the favour of that gentleman to give the baronet an opportunity of seeing her, by inviting her to Brightley a few days before

their return, without mentioning her name for a short period, or discovering her circumstances; submitting the consequence to chance, or, to speak more unfashionably, the direction of providence.

Mr. Finch immediately gave into the scheme proposed by Mr. Stevens, and engaged the young lady's company, previous to the meeting of his friends. Mrs. Stevens herself declined the invitation, but most willingly sent her daughter, in compliance with the worthy officer's request.

Mr. Stevens's heart was strongly divided, between his desire of practising a little honest artifice, in order to discover the baronet's real sentiments of his sister-on an interview, in the character of a stranger, and declaring his long concealed passion for miss Shelburne.

To part with that lady in London, his inclination for her unrevealed, and, possibly, exposing her to applications, which
(unen-

(unengaged as he imagined her) she might be induced to approve, was running a risk of too great consequence, not to cause him the utmost perplexity. Lady Brightley agreeably relieved him from this solicitude, by telling Mrs. Shelburne, that she hoped miss Lucy's father would not make the least hesitation to oblige her with her daughter's company for a few months, in return for the long journey she had taken on her account.

They soon arrived safe in London, and Mr. Shelburne professed himself under the highest obligations to lady Brightley, for her kind care of his Lucy, and immediately complied with her ladyship's request, with respect to taking her into Gloucestershire. Mr. Finch was apprised of their proceedings and intentions, by Mr. Stevens, and went forth many miles to meet them, in their return to the village, accompanied by all its inhabitants, except the curate and his lady. The countenance of each attending rustic was enlightened with joy unfeigned,

feigned, for the return of this worthy lady, and her amiable son. Miss Stevens had been arrived at Mr. Finch's only three days preceding this happy occasion, and accompanied that gentleman and his lady in their friendly excursion.

She was dressed to the utmost advantage mourning would admit of, and her complexion received additional beauty from the dismal contrast by which it was surrounded. lady Brightley was the first who perceived the affectionate cavalcade, and, on Mr. and Mrs. Finch's saluting her with some obliging compliments, expressed a grateful surprise at this unexpected mark of their friendship, and the attachment of the villagers. 'We,' returned that gentleman, 'congratulate ourselves on this happy re-peopling our little retreat, as your arrival will restore that wonted felicity we always enjoyed in your presence.'

'You are very gallant,' replied lady Brightley, smiling, 'but pray what young lady

‘lady is that I see?’ ‘Oh,’ said Mr. Finch, ‘it is a little friend of mine, whose merit, ‘I flatter myself, will equally recommend ‘her to your ladyship’s favour and honour, ‘I can assure you, she is extremely ambitious of. Come hither, my girl,’ continued he, addressing miss Stevens, ‘and ‘speak for yourself.’ The young lady advanced, with a becoming modesty, and exchanged an affectionate look with her beloved brother, whose fraternal emotions were with difficulty suppressed; and, had not the company’s attention been drawn off by other objects, could not possibly have escaped their observation. Lady Brightley said several polite things to miss Stevens, and then, addressing Mr. Finch, ‘Tell ‘me,’ said she, ‘by what magic you have ‘allured this third agreeable female to our ‘obscure village, and why I do not see ‘miss Fortescue in this little train?’ ‘We ‘have lost that amiable girl,’ replied Mrs. Finch, ‘some time, and so far are my affections engaged by her, that I almost ‘regret her absence as much as that of my

‘own child, who has been obliged, with-
‘in these last two months, to rejoin his
‘corps.’ ‘That is very unlucky,’ said sir
William, ‘I was in hopes we should have
‘reached Brightley before his departure.’
‘What! no mention of miss Fortescue
‘from you, sir knight?’ said Mr. Finch,
archly, ‘and have the united charms of
‘youth, beauty, and innocence, been in-
‘sufficient to subdue your insensibility? If
‘so, I pronounce you invulnerable.’ ‘My
‘time for sighing is not yet come, sir,’ re-
turned the baronet, ‘but I am fully per-
‘suaded, nevertheless, that there is such a
‘day in store for me.’ The coach then
drove on to Mr. Finch’s habitation, where
all the company alighted, and spent the
evening agreeably together. Among other
conversation, it was debated, whether miss
Shelburne should make a visit, or not, at
the curate’s. The gentlemen strongly op-
posed it, from an opinion, that the treat-
ment that lady had received from her aunt,
and by her uncle’s passive acquiescence, she

was

was discharged from every dutiful and respectful tie.

The ladies sentiments by no means coincided herein, as a breach of propriety in Mr. and Mrs. Slaughter, they could not consider as an authority for a breach of duty in miss Shelburne; and therefore it was resolved, by a majority, that she should make a visit at the parsonage-house the next morning.

Sir William bore but little part in this conversation. The elegance of miss Stevens's manners, her blooming complexion, and striking resemblance of his friend, engaging his whole attention. Had she not appeared in the gloomy trappings which custom enjoins surviving relations to assume, in compliment to the memory of departed friends, he would have challenged her as the undoubted sister of his much esteemed Frank; but the circumstance of a sable habit puzzled him, and inclined him to believe, that she was brought to Bright-

ley, and careſſed with ſuch peculiar marks of approbation, on the young captain's account; a ſuggeſtion by no means pleaſing to him. He was deſirous of enquiring her name and family, but apprehended the raillery of Mr. Finch, who, he was aſſured, would impute his curioſity to an intereſted account.

On their arrival at the hall, the baronet aſked his friend abundance of queſtions concerning this fair ſtranger, and added, 'I ſhould, Frank, have infallibly concluded ſhe was a near relation of yours, had not her dreſs been a contradiction to ſuch a conjecture.' Mr. Stevens attended, with pleaſure, to ſir William's converſation, and flattered himſelf, that he perceived ſome favourable ſymptoms for the ſucceſs of his ſcheme, in the young gentleman's unaccuſtomed ſolicitude, with regard to his ſiſter. 'There is,' continued the baronet, 'an uncommon ſimilitude in your features, and your voices are no leſs conſonant. Surely it is amazing, that ſtrangers
' ſhould

‘should have so strong a resemblance of each other!’ Perhaps, sir,’ returned Mr. Stevens, ‘the likeness you take notice of, between that young lady and me, may consist alone in your imagination, nor may strike lady Brightley or miss Shelburne.’ ‘Now I recollect,’ said her ladyship, ‘you are mistaken, I am quite of my son’s opinion; for, excepting the feminine softness, and beauty of her complexion, the faces are exactly the same. What say you, miss Lucy, do not you think so?’ ‘Your ladyship’s sentiments are mine,’ reply’d miss Shelburne, ‘as well on this, as most other occasions.’

The next morning sir William made an early visit to Mr. Finch, under the pretence of talking over foreign scenes; but that gentleman, wilfully unmindful of the thin disguise, demanded, to whose account he should place so unusual a favour, as the company of sir William Brightley was, at seven o’clock in the morning, unattended by his shadow, Mr. Stevens? The baro-

net was visibly disconcerted by this abrupt interrogative, and replied, he little expected such an observation from Mr. Finch. 'Guilty, upon my honour,' returned the facetious gentleman; 'the infallible marks of guilt are upon you. Come, come, confess; and I promise you shall not find much difficulty in obtaining absolution.' 'I do confess, sir,' replied sir William, 'that I am astonished at your behaviour; but you are very welcome to divert yourself at my expence.'

'Serious too!' resumed Mr. Finch, 'that alone is confirmation. O' my word, the little archer has been very dexterous. Well, and how do you feel? very, very sick? poor sir William!' 'I am glad to see you so merry, sir,' returned the baronet (rising, apparently mortified) 'but as this disposition but ill suits with the pleasure and improvement I promised myself from your conversation, I will wish you a good morning, and renew my visit at some other time.'

'And

‘And can you leave me,’ said Mr. Finch,
‘without the end of your visitation’s being
‘answered? I will ring for the ladies, to
‘make you amends for the mortification I
‘have given you, and, if you behave well,
‘will be a generous confidant.’

The entrance of Mrs. Finch, and miss Stevens, prevented the baronet’s reply, and the presence of the latter soon dispelled the little chagrin he had contracted from Mr. Finch’s unexpected raillery. In short, he that morning gazed his heart away; and, by the personal impression of miss Stevens, was the memory of miss Stevens erased, and his desire of visiting a certain cottage in Wiltshire, totally obliterated. The ladies retiring to dress for dinner, alone suggested the recollection of the time of day to him, and constrained him, most reluctantly, to return to his friends at the hall. Love, the irresistible, the all-prevalent, and all-mighty, overspread the baronet’s benignant countenance with a pensive cast, and, no less involuntarily, than instantaneously, occasioned

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caused a marvellous change in his disposition. His volubility, nay, his friendship became, in a degree, a sacrifice to this newly inspired passion.

Mr. Stevens, hitherto the essential to his happiness, without whose participation, whatever was fair or grateful to the eye, pleasing or attractive to the ear, rational or entertaining to the mind, were incomplete and disregarded; was now shunned by him, with the same industry he was wont to seek and solicit his company; and the envious consideration of his happier lot, in unreservedly enjoying the conversation of the woman he admired, and free from the unkind raillery himself had sustained, struck deep into his heart. He made a short dinner, and immediately retired to his apartment. The tender lady Brightley was alarmed at this change, and besought Mr. Stevens to follow her son, and inform himself of the cause of his apparent uneasiness.

This

This gentleman, far from conceiving that his presence, instead of lessening, would aggravate his friend's perplexity, immediately complied with her ladyship's request, and entered the baronet's study with his wonted familiarity.

Sir William arose, with a disordered aspect, and enquired, if he brought a message from her ladyship? Confounded and astonished at this reception, Mr. Stevens retreated some few paces, and, bowing low, said, he would, for the future, remember, that sir William Brightley's retirement was to be sacred.

‘Frank,’ said the baronet, struck by his behaviour, ‘can you forgive me? I am
‘petulant, unreasonable, and, with respect
‘to my treatment of you, highly blame-
‘able. But I am ill, uneasy, and whimsi-
‘cal, and beg to be indulged a few mo-
‘ments in my own thoughts, and will
‘wait upon my mother and you presently.’
Mr. Stevens retired without attempting to
reply,

reply, wounded in his pride, his affection, and friendship. Unconscious, as he was, of every intentional offence, unaccustomed to encounter a clouded brow, and, uniform as he had always found sir William in his attachment, surprised, mortified, and shocked him. He had heard that lady Brightley was subject to melancholy attacks, and began, on reflection, to pity, rather than condemn, his altered friend, and feared for his intellects, in as great a degree, as the baronet's guardians had once done for her ladyship's. He endeavoured to compose himself before he returned to the parlour, to prevent this affectionate mother's anxiety being increased, and determined to consult miss Shelburne, the first opportunity, in what manner to proceed.

Lady Brightley enquired, with fond solicitude, concerning her darling son, and Mr. Stevens replied, that he did not imagine the young gentleman was otherwise ill, than from the fatigue of his journey, and

and a restless night he heard him mention he had passed, and hoped a few hours repose would perfectly restore him. This equivocal answer only half satisfied the good lady's tender doubts and apprehensions; and, finding herself disinclined for conversation, she retired also, begging she might be informed when her son returned to their company.

So soon as her ladyship was withdrawn, Mr. Stevens communicated his fears and observations to his admired miss Shelburne, who was sincerely affected by them, and joined her earnest wishes with Mr. Stevens's, that Heaven would be pleased to avert so great a calamity.

Mr. Stevens found his mind so softened by his friendly concern for the baronet, and mortified by the affront he had received, as to be unequal to the happy opportunity he enjoyed, of declaring his schemes and affection to miss Shelburne, or to the longer concealment of them. 'I am, madam,' said he,

he, 'unable to preserve a false character in
'your sight, if I have your permission to
'reveal myself. How I have hitherto elu-
'ded your penetration I know not; but
'that young female, now at Mr. Finch's,
'is, in reality, my sister, brought there
'privately for a purpose I will explain to
'you, if you will vouchsafe your attention.'

Miss Shelburne was no less surprised at,
than curious to learn Mr. Stevens's motives
for such extraordinary behaviour, and,
therefore, lent a willing ear to his relation
of the baronet's imaginary approbation of
that young lady, his grandfather's decease,
and the advancement of his own fortune.
'Since you have, madam,' continued Mr.
Stevens, 'indulged me with so large a share
'of your attentive regard, I must intreat
'you to permit me to trespass a little longer
'upon it, to tell a tale, which my eyes, my
'actions, have told already.' The conver-
sation now became interesting; the lady
blushed, looked downward, but attempted
not the smallest interruption.

'From

‘From the first moment I beheld you,’
resumed Mr. Stevens ‘you engaged my ut-
‘most tender consideration. The various
‘turns of your, now happily, subdued
‘disorder, have as variously shook my
‘peace and happiness; but my honor, pru-
‘dence, and generosity, compelled me to
‘a painful silence. Not that I drew the
‘least presumption from my grand-father’s
‘favour, with respect to miss Shelburne’s
‘heart, but as I flatter myself if I am not
‘so miserable as to be disapproved by her,
‘it will be a sanction for me with her pa-
‘rents, who have an undoubted right to
‘be consulted on such an occasion.’ Miss
Shelburne making no reply, ‘On you,
‘madam, alone my fate depends; for un-
‘less you condescend to encourage an ap-
‘plication to your friends, I must give up
‘my every expectation. Could I describe
‘the feelings of my heart when you were
‘hurried to town on my account, and all
‘that I endured, previous to your letter to
‘lady Brightley, your compassion at least
‘would be on my side. But alas! must I
‘expect

‘expect only compassion from miss Shelburne?’

‘Sir’, replied that amiable young lady, ‘as I despise affectation, and, perhaps, have been guilty of some little indiscretions which put my approbation of you beyond a doubt, I will dare to acknowledge, that I am not blind to the merits of your character; be it your part to remember, I have a father and a mother, and it shall be mine, not to be disobedient to their command, or deficient in gratitude to Mr. Stevens, for the compliment he pays me.’ ‘Kind miss Shelburne,’ returned the transported lover, ‘your conduct is uniformly good, benevolent and gracious! May I then presume to engage lady Brightley, and sir William’s interest?’ ‘I will rely upon Mr. Stevens’s honor and discretion,’ replied miss Shelburne, ‘for if I mistake him not, he cannot be ungenerous, or commit an impropriety.’

During

During this interview of the lovers, the baronet was in a disagreeable situation. He was sensible he had treated his friend unworthily, and given pain to a heart he highly esteemed. 'How poor a figure', said he, 'do I make in my own eyes, for my captious, unreasonable folly! If it is love by which I am actuated, to me it proves a narrower, not an enlarger of the mind. What a mean disposition do I possess to be capable of spurning a tried, approved, and valuable friend! but I will immediately seek him, and atone for my past behaviour. Yet why,' resumed he, 'should I suffer an inclination for a stranger to subdue that desire I have so long entertained and flattered Stevens with, the execution of becoming his brother? for however amiable this stranger, she cannot excel his sister. I will not, therefore, yield to a softness that will deprive me of the connexion I have long promised myself with an unfortunate, deserving family, and which my fortune enables me to raise from obscurity. This unknown lady, may, per-

haps,

‘haps, have relations that can deal out
‘the gifts of prosperity to her with a liberal hand, but the lovely miss Stevens is
‘banished polite society, for the enjoyment
‘of which she is no less qualified by nature than education, and compelled to
‘find that refuge in a cottage, which a
‘palace might, without indignity, afford
‘her. No,’ added he, ‘I will be just and
‘generous, and prefer the woman whose
‘merits I am assured of, and whose brother
‘I am indissolubly attached to, to a person
‘who is come from I know not where, and
‘would, perhaps, marry my title and fortune, whilst she contemned my person.
‘And yet, can such deceit lie hid in such a
‘form? can her eyes sparkle with innocent, quick sensibility, and indicate
‘a pure, ingenuous mind, yet be deceitful? sure it cannot be---but then, miss
‘Stevens---in short, I am too much disturbed to determine any thing, and will
‘seek a dissipation in the company of my
‘friends.’

With

With this irresolute resolution he entered the parlour, at a juncture when Mr. Stevens and Miss Shelburne could have dispensed with his presence. They, nevertheless, bore this interruption with becoming resignation, as they found, with pleasure, that the baronet was much more composed in mind. Lady Brightley being informed of her son's having left his chamber, she joined the young party with a pleased and satisfactory aspect.

Miss Shelburne left Lady Brightley and the friends together, for some time, as she had postponed her intended morning visit to her uncle, until the afternoon, and proposed being back to tea. This compliment was strained, and, in reality, a penance to the young lady, but she was determined to leave malice no foundation to build upon, nor have herself any thing to reproach her heart with.

Mrs. Alice ushered her into the parlour and withdrew, in order to acquaint her master

master and mistress that their niece was come, to wait upon them. Mrs. Slaughter's resentment ran so high, that she refused going down, declaring, she would never consent to countenance the disobedient. As her power was absolute, her humble husband did not attempt to oppose her resolution, but was sneaking out of the room to receive his niece, and enquire after his sister. It was impossible to accomplish this design unperceived; Mrs. Slaughter, therefore, vehemently accused him of an intention to encourage his niece in her audacious behaviour, and protested, unless he would forbid her the house, she would never more act as mistress of it.

The poor curate endeavoured to expostulate with his unreasonably enraged lady, which provoked her to such a degree, that she descended to call his family many opprobrious names, and said, she detested herself for her folly, in condescending to be so nearly connected with such an upstart, illiterate race, and wondered how she came

to interfere with respect to his niece's, and her nephew's highway friend, as she was now convinced that it was best that beggars should inter-marry with beggars, to preserve worthy blood from contamination. Miss Shelburne was highly diverted at this speech, which was uttered with so much vociferation, that she distinctly heard every syllable of it, and secretly wished she might be denied admission.

But Mrs. Slaughter's curiosity and desire of tormenting, at length getting the better of her pride and displeasure, she consented to her husband's seeing his niece, provided she might be commanded up stairs, as waiting upon her, she said, was shewing her too much grace. This proposal was gladly complied with by the timid husband, as a compromise for the indulgence she permitted him, and the lovely miss Shelburne did not dispute this haughty injunction.

So

So soon as she entered her aunt's apartment, 'Well madam,' said that imperious lady, 'when is your romance to be concluded, and the run-away scene between Mr. Stevens and you performed? for I doubt not but that will be the end of your peregrinations, and an eternal disgrace brought, by your forward indiscretion, upon the Brightley family.' 'Madam,' said miss Shelburne, 'permit me to wave your ungenteel questions and conclusion, and enquire after your health and my uncle's, which in reality, is the sole purport of my visit.' 'It is false,' returned Mrs. Slaughter, 'it is by lady Brightley's instigation, you are come to spy into the manner of your uncle's life and mine, in order to furnish them with a subject, and, therefore, I must tell you, the less I see of you the better.' 'Madam,' returned miss Shelburne, 'it was a sense of duty, though, perhaps, overstrained, that brought me here, and the same sentiments shall restrain me from repeating my visits now I have an aunt's
' com-

'commands to desist them.' 'Impertinent
 'minx! however wise you may think your-
 'self, I will venture to tell you, that when
 'you think proper to exchange your present
 'name for that stroling beggar Stevens, I
 'shall insist upon our relationship, or, more
 'properly, alliance, being forgot; for I will
 'never be stiled aunt by that shabby fel-
 'low.' 'Madam, I believe,' replied miss
 'Shelburne, 'I can as safely answer for that
 'gentleman's compliance with your injunc-
 'tion, as my own, and, be assured, this
 'is the last trouble you will receive from
 'Lucy Shelburne.'

So saying, she quitted this strange wo-
 man's apartment, her uncle not daring to
 oppose her departure, and hurried back to
 the hall, to divert lady Brightley with the
 pretty scene she had been engaged in. Her
 ladyship smiled at the account she receiv-
 ed of her sister's mistaken arrogance, and
 said, 'I wonder what reception I shall
 'meet with, when I make my visit? for,
 'however extravagant this woman's pride

‘ may render her, it cannot induce me to
‘ forget she is sir Samuel Brightley’s sister;
‘ a remembrance which will, in my esti-
‘ mation, exculpate her commission of a
‘ thousand foolish improprieties.’

Mr. Finch and Mr. Stevens took an opportunity of informing lady Brightley, of the steps they had presumed to take, with respect to miss Stevens, and the change in the circumstances of that family. Her ladyship joined in the plot, and said, It would give her infinite satisfaction to find her son make a worthy choice, where there was no obstacle to obstruct his happiness. The young lady and the baronet were alone, ignorant of their friends views, nor had miss Stevens the least suspicion of the real cause of her name’s being concealed.

Whilst things were in this situation at Brightley, captain Finch’s unabated affection for miss Fortescue was the source of great unhappiness to him; all possibility of

THEIR HUMOUR.

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of either conversing or corresponding with her being cut off, by the indefatigable watchfulness, and incorruptible disposition, of Mrs. Rebecca, who possessed the single virtue of steady and uniform attachment to her master.

He was well acquainted with Mr. Macpherson's family, and was informed by miss of her brother's intended marriage with miss Fortescue. This intelligence affected him exceedingly, and induced him to have recourse to stratagem, in order to discover whether this gentleman was the father's or the daughter's choice. 'It is but too probable,' said he, 'that this lovely girl will be constrained to alienate her hand and heart. She has no assisting friend, no interposing advocate; I will therefore assume the habit of a servant, and lurk in the neighbourhood, in order to help her at her greatest need. My inferiority of fortune, though it forbids my taking advantage of her youth and innocence, with respect to engaging her to become my wife,

‘does not, by any means, forbid my proving a sincere friend. If she can approve the wretch her father hath chosen, I will not attempt to interfere, but should she happily be averse, I will hazard my life to prevent the unnatural sacrifice.’

Agreeable to this resolution, the young gentleman obtained leave from his colonel (who was previously acquainted with his passion) to absent himself from his corps for six months, on the bold design of introducing himself, by some means or other, at Mr. Fortescue's. The captain took a lodging in a bye street, not far distant from the counsellor's, at a barber's, who had free egress and regress to his house, having shaved him gratis for seven successive years, as a fee for having examined the deeds by which this poor fellow was intitled, after his mother's decease, to a small copyhold, in order to grant him a trifling mortgage upon it, which he nevertheless did not think proper to do. Mr. Finch's regimental was exchanged for a footman's frock,

frock, and the title of captain waved for a period, and plain Frank substituted in its stead, the supposed discarded servant of colonel Blunt. In this situation and disguise, he continued a fortnight, without being able to obtain any greater satisfaction than viewing his mistress's window twenty times a day.

We have already brought the reader acquainted with a strange family that had dined at Mr. Fortescue's, the succeeding day to miss Caroline's arrival at home. A match being concluded between the ancient parties, the provident youth consented to accept of the lovely girl, as a *passé-par-tout* to her fortune, being no less blind to her intrinsic merit, by his affectation, than he was by nature. The lover was, by Mr. Fortescue's appointment, to wait upon miss, to enjoy à tête à tête, one afternoon, when his presence would be necessary at Westminster-hall, by which means, the young couple would be perfectly free from interruption. Miss Caroline was informed

by Mrs. Rebecca, of this intended private interview, and, could she have dispensed with the sacrifice of her veracity, would have counterfeited an indisposition; but she was so particular as to call such deceptions, tempting the Almighty (from whose unerring hand our portions are dealt out to us) to visit her with some real calamity, for a punishment. She therefore, though with the utmost reluctance, prepared to give him a reception at her father's command.

The tea equipage was ranged in great order, by the ingenious house-keeper, and the table graced, to do the lover of her young mistress honor, with a sugar-dish of her own, of great antiquity, and highly esteemed by her; for Mr. Fortescue did not abound with elegancies of any kind.

At six o'clock, Mr. Macpherson made his appearance, glittering from head to foot. His coat was a silver tissue, his waist-coat

coat curiously embroidered, his ruffles point lace, his stiff neck (ill suited to such ornament) adorned with a valuable solitaire, and his shoe and knee buckles, of brazil crystal; yet were these fine trappings ineffectual, to the rendering the wearer ought but a long legged, long sided pale faced fop, over-run with affectation, and knowing only, where it would have been meritorious to have been ignorant. Mrs. Rebecca admired his dress, and really considered him as a very fashionable, polite, fine gentleman, and ushered him into the parlour with apparent marks of approbation.

Miss Fortescue arose, on the entrance of the empty fop; and, recommending a seat to him, presumed to replace herself without farther ceremony. To prevent a frothy conversation, she immediately rang for the water, and plied her gallant with tea, in return for his high strained compliments. This relief, however, failed her, for Mrs. Rebecca, first duly enquiring, if the gentleman had done, deprived her

of this little employment, and exposed her to an insipid persecution.

Mr. Macpherson, having chosen a most delectable situation, for the grateful indulgence of contemplating his own fine figure, conceiving he must of necessity entertain his mistress, said, through his closed teeth, 'I have been reflecting, during the servant's attendance, on the consummate felicity, Mr. Fortesque will confer upon me, in constituting me his son-in-law; a title, madam, that, without flattery, will render me vainer than would an imperial diadem.' 'Empty coxcomb,' thought the lovely maid, 'is it possible such vanity can receive the least addition?' 'What says my charmer,' resumed he, 'will it not be an age until we are at liberty to cast off our present restraint, and shew the world that we have a taste for life, in its utmost elegance and refinement?' 'I am,' returned miss Fortesque, 'am far from being impatient under my present circumstances, as, from my infancy, I have been accustomed

‘ed to a retired life, and have contracted an
‘unconquerable aversion to, what is called,
‘the polite world.’ ‘You amaze me, ma-
‘dam,’ returned he, ‘can a lady so young
‘and beautiful as you are, affect solitude?’
‘I protest it is a most unparalleled conceit.’
‘What you are pleased, sir,’ replied miss
Fortescue, ‘so genteelly to bestow the epi-
‘thet of conceit upon, is, I can assure you,
‘a natural propensity. I am but ill quali-
‘fied to make a figure in the drawing-
‘room. My understanding uncultivated,
‘my manners rude, and capacity limited;
‘judge, sir, what an unfit companion I
‘should be for your relations and friends,
‘whose advantages of education, have re-
‘ceived no inconsiderable improvement
‘from the conversation of well-bred ac-
‘quaintance.’ ‘You have, madam, a
‘face,’ said the lover, ‘which whoever
‘beholds, must forget every other defici-
‘ency, admitting what you advance to be
‘fact.’ ‘It is too great a hazard, sir,’ ob-
served the lady, ‘unless, indeed, I could
‘be ever beheld with your partial eyes.’

‘All *men*, madam,’ said he, ‘must do justice to your charms, and approve my choice; as for the *ladies*, I suppose half a score at least, will be ready to burst with spite, for they can but ill brook the loss of an admirer.’ ‘I thought, sir,’ returned the perverse innocent, ‘you were endeavouring to persuade me, that you admired me alone; how comes it then, that I should incur the resentment of half a score of my own sex, by receiving you in a character which would entitle me to your person? unless, indeed, you have professed equal admiration of the number you have mentioned?’ ‘Why, really, madam,’ said he, surveying himself in the glass, ‘you have hit it; I am like all other well-bred young fellows, at the devotion of the whole sex, until I assume the chain of matrimonial probation.’

‘This, sir, I must acknowledge,’ replied miss Fortescue, ‘is a specimen of good breeding I was hitherto unacquainted with.’ ‘Amiable novice!’ returned
Mr.

Mr. Macpherson, 'how I adore your simplicity!' The ball not being returned by miss Fortescue, a silence ensued for a whole quarter of an hour, the gentleman having exhausted his fund of wit; and before he could effect a supply, the counsellor returned, when miss Caroline, to her unspeakable comfort, was permitted by her father to withdraw.

Mr. Macpherson was profuse in encomiums on the lady's wit and beauty, and begged the preliminaries might be settled as soon as possible, as he was too much in love, not to apprehend delays. The counsellor assured his son elect, that he would use the utmost expedition, and, at the same time, gave him full permission to repeat his visits, whenever he should be so disposed; and the young gentleman hurried home to his mother, to impart the glad tidings of his success, on which he plumed himself not a little. Immediately upon his departure, the whole house was thrown into confusion, by the vociferous complaints

and bewailings of Mrs. Rebecca, for the untimely fate of her great grand mother's sugar-dish, which had been preserved, without crack or blemish, down to the fourth generation. The poor unfortunate boy, who was so unhappy as to have demolished this valuable piece of furniture, trembled with excess of terror; for this maiden possessing most excellent lungs, and scolding being her peculiar talent, she rattled him off with extreme severity. She would not accept of any other reparation, or be appeased, unless Mr. Fortescue would discharge the lad instantly, which, for peace sake, was at length complied with.

Mr. Perkins, the barber, waiting upon his worthy master in the morning, to perform the accustomed operation, was informed of the fray, by Mrs. Rebecca, who was half inclined to relent, as the lad had made himself uncommonly useful. Mr. Perkins was too complaisant not to lend an attentive ear to this tale of sorrow, but as he valued himself upon not troubling his head

head with what did not concern him, dispatched his business, with more than usual dexterity, and returning home, related these particulars to the wife of his bosom.

The captain happening to be present, was well nigh discovering himself, by his rapture. He eagerly besought his landlord to recommend him to the gentleman, for that he had so long lain out of place, he should be glad to accept of any thing.

‘I would not advise you, Mr. Frank,’ said the loquacious Mrs. Perkins, ‘to engage yourself in that family, upon any account.

‘Mr. Fortescue (I am sure we have reason to say it) is too close fitted to be honest, and we to this day, feel the weight of his covetousness and cunning, but are obliged to hold a candle----you understand

me,’ added she, jogging the captain’s elbow. ‘I believe,’ returned the captain,

‘I can be as conformable as most lads, and if you will favour me so far

‘Mr. Perkins, as to recommend me, I will take care to behave in such a manner as

‘to

‘to give satisfaction.’ ‘I wish, Mr. Frank,’ resumed his landlady, ‘I could persuade you to keep yourself out of this miser’s clutches; take my word for it, if you do not, you will have reason to repent.’ ‘I must not be frightened at bugbears,’ returned the captain, ‘where my bread is depending: there is no place without its difficulties, and that is the best that has the fewest. I am, nevertheless, obliged to you for your kind advice, and if it should be impossible for me to stay, I should be glad of my old lodging again.’ ‘I will endeavour to serve you to morrow morning,’ said the barber, ‘when I wait upon his honor again; but you must keep in the way, as he may have a desire to see you.’

Mr. Finch received great satisfaction from this assurance, and, thinking he might with safety trust his landlord with his motives for engaging with so strange a man as Mr. Fortescue, he invited him to partake a chearful glass with him, over which he informed

formed him of every particular, and they settled together a plan of future operation. On the morrow, the barber performed his promise, and was commissioned to send the young man to pass an examination with the counsellor directly.

On entering that house which contained the object of his best affections, the captain was greatly affected, and answered Mr. Fortescue's several interrogatories with a diffidence and modesty that determined his fate; for, notwithstanding that gentleman's heart was uninformed by either of the above qualifications, he was no stranger to their value, and never failed to prefer, in a servant, the bashful, to the forward. The captain agreed to perform the most servile offices of the house, on receiving a small gratuity, a shabby livery, and his board; and as Mrs. Rebecca's demand for assistance was urgent, and the lad out of place, he was enjoined to come that very evening, when he was highly extolled, by his future fellow-servant, for his obliging-
ness

ness in complying with her requests; which was, in reality, no more than acting agreeably to his own inclination.

When first he entered upon his new employment, he was very much at a loss, and Miss Caroline's presence did not a little contribute to increase his awkwardness; but practice, and a willing mind, as Mrs. Rebecca phrased it, would render him, if not perfectly, decently handy.

He had now the pleasure of feasting his eyes with beholding this unsuspecting fair one, in accommodating her with the necessaries she stood in need of, at dinner and supper; for which he was rewarded with those benign smiles that arise from benevolence of heart. He had also the pleasure to find, that his diligence to ingratiate himself with Mrs. Rebecca was successful; and so satisfied was she of him, that she would dwell on his merit whole hours together.

Miss

Miss Caroline, though free from every species of pride, was, nevertheless, by suggestions of prudence, superior to the leveling herself to the company of a footboy; no small instance of innate dignity, in one brought up so much about the kitchen as she had been.

The captain had continued in this state of humiliation only three days, before he was compelled to perform the mortifying task of waiting upon his rival, and was an eye witness of the approbation his master entertained for this over-lick'd cub (as he might justly be stiled) as his education enabled him to play the fool in a larger degree than ever honest nature intended he should.

Several hours was this creature indulged, each succeeding day, with the company and conversation of this amiable maid, without his heart's being informed with one tender, grateful, or generous sentiment. When he reflected upon his approaching change

change of condition, his thoughts were confined to self alone. The fortune he should be intitled to, the shining equipage he should possess, and the noble bets he would lay at Newmarket, flattered his love of pleasure, and gave him the highest satisfaction. Miss Caroline, all lovely as she was, both in person and mind, was totally disregarded by this empty being, unendued with a heart capable of a humane or rational impression. Yet the youth did love (if a passion dishonourable, depraved, and impure, can come under that denomination) and the object of his passion was the fair daughter of an inn-keeper, with whom he had cohabited ever since he attained the age of seventeen. This young woman was mistress of deep cunning, was mercenary, and inconstant, and lavished the bounty of her unsuspecting gallant upon a corporal in the guards, with whom she privately intrigued.

Jenny Dawkins, for that was the name of Mr. Macpherson's admired lady, was apprised of her keeper's intended nuptials, who,

who, on revealing his intentions to her, had generously promised, that she should have a handsome settlement out of miss Fortescue's fortune. It may seem strange, that our deep researching counsellor should make so unworthy a choice for his daughter; but the reader's amazement will cease, when he is informed, that he had the several great ends in view of advancement in his profession, retaining the management of his daughter's fortune, as well as her husband's, which was very considerable, and entering himself, once more, the matrimonial trammels.

His son elect was nephew to a widow lady, immensely rich, and particularly agreeable. Mr. Fortescue's profession had introduced him to her acquaintance, and she soon became attached to his person, and agreeable behaviour: but, being far from the novice he before had to deal with, she was qualified, both in capacity and spirit, to punish all his transgressions. On her first discovering her growing inclination for
the

the counsellor, she determined to preserve it within due subordination to her prudence and artifice, and only surrender her person on discrete and advantageous terms.

Mr. Fortescue was really delighted with her conversation, and pleased with her person, and, as he had ever easy access, and apparently possessed a share in Mrs. Swinton's approbation, he ventured, in one of the happy interviews, to declare himself without reserve. The lady affected great astonishment at what she heard, and protested, she little expected to have made so extraordinary a conquest. Upon the lawyer's repeatedly assuring her, that his heart was irreparably gone, she condescended to treat with him, concerning some necessary preliminaries to so great an event.

“I will, Mr. Fortescue,” said she, “wave the usual parade on these occasions, as you and I have seen too much of the world to be children; and, therefore, I will ingenuously communicate the con-
cessions,

cessions I shall require on your part; after which, you shall be at liberty to make your objections and proposals.' The lawyer assenting, the good lady proceeded. 'I have a nephew, Mr. Fortescue, whom I have ever considered as my own child, and you have one daughter; their fortunes are pretty equal, their ages perfectly suitable. Jemmy will be my undoubted heir, I, therefore, think it will be for our common interest, previous to our union, to unite them. It is true, my nephew has not all that brightness of understanding that might be wished, but, I give you my word, he is quite the fine gentleman. Your daughter, I am informed, has seen very little of life; she will be, undoubtedly, taken with him, and I am confident the young man will comply with any proposition to oblige me. It would, certainly, be prudent for you to reserve the management of the young lady's fortune, which, in conjunction with the thousands I possess, and your own private purse, will enable you to purchase
a peer-

‘a peerage, the title to devolve, on your
decease, to our children.’

Mr. Fortescue’s ears had never been so agreeably tickled in his whole life. He immediately swallowed the bait, engaged for his daughter’s compliance, and was introduced, to Mrs. Swinton’s family, in the character of her intended husband; when their intentions, with respect to Jemmy and miss Caroline, were imparted, to the general satisfaction of all the relations.

For this purpose was the young lady hurried from her country friends, and as her consent was by no means judged necessary, it was never once asked; nor had she longer time allotted her, to receive her brilliant spark, upon the footing of a lover, than the drawing of the settlement would require.

All these particulars Mr. Finch learned from the lacquey of his favoured competitor, whose natural communicative propensity

sity was heightened by a chearful glass, administered by the captain for that very purpose.

The lover, at the same time alarmed at the threatening disposal of his mistress, conceived the utmost detestation for Mr. Fortescue's proceedings. To sacrifice such a daughter to avarice and ambition, unmindful of her repose, or the temper and character of the wretch into whose power she was to be delivered, was a reflection of horror to him. 'Shall I, then,' said he, 'be
' accessory to such inhumanity and injustice? Shall I be restrained, by a too nice
' sense of honour, and consideration of filial duty, from discovering myself to this
' worthy girl, and prevailing upon her to
' permit me to save her from destruction?
' Ought not base actions to be controverted
' by honest acts? And, when a parent forgets, or discards his nature, shall not a
' child, from a principle of self-preservation and defence, be allowed, without
' censure, to seek an hospitable asylum?
' Yes,

* Yes, decorum must yield to necessity, nor
* shall this dear creature become a victim to
* rapacious pride and cruelty, to avoid the
* imputation of the run-away and disobedi-
* It is incumbent upon us, for example sake,
* not only to act with, but preserve the ap-
* pearance of, propriety. But, surely, no
* one can advance so palpable a falsehood,
* as, that quitting the house of a parent,
* however clandestinely, can be culpable,
* when it is merely to avoid a most wilful
* and solemn perjury. Can it be consistent
* with either right reason or religion, that,
* to preserve one's duty inviolate, we should
* commit a breach of many duties, equally
* striking and binding, and engage in a
* life of perpetual sin? for a marriage,
* where the will is constrained, is no other
* than a legal prostitution. O that I were
* capable of forming a scheme, that could
* at once save my Caroline's delicacy from
* the shock of elopement, and preserve her
* from the impending calamity! but it can-
* not be. Yet, as her reputation is dearer
* to me than my own happiness, I will de-
* liver

‘ liver her with all the honour her situation
‘ will admit of, nor once request her to be-
‘ stow her hand upon me, until the sanction
‘ of her friends approbation, if not her fa-
‘ ther’s consent, may encourage and autho-
‘ rize her to confer that blessing upon me.’

Mrs. Rebecca, being a woman of uncommon penetration, soon discovered that Mr. Frank was in love, and, as her charms had once inspired a simple swain with that tender passion, she thought it far from impossible it should be the present case, especially as she was positive she had observed the young man to view her person attentively, and ever found him uncommonly assiduous to obey her commands. This supposed conquest she communicated to her young mistress, who was obliged to listen, in appearance, to every dull tale this creature chose to entertain her with. She gave herself very little trouble about the loves of these domestics, as her heart and attention were engrossed by her own affairs.

‘How unhappy,’ said she, ‘is my situation, without mother or friend to advise or converse with! My father evidently considers me as his property, and makes a less scrupulous assignment of me than he would of any other possession. My lover’s approbation and esteem is absorbed by himself alone; nor have I any other prospect, were this intended wedding to take place, than being forsaken, despised, and cruelly treated. Ah, my dear Mrs. Finch, what a husband is your’s! His affection increased by a succession of years, your happiness his own, and your smiles the delight of his eyes! Charming woman, as you are, this would not have been your fate, had your father, giddy with ambition, only sought the aggrandizement of his family. What, then, have I to expect? My ideas, unenlarged by education; my inexperience, my youth, subjecting me to error and caprice; no love to cover the glaring faults of the husband allotted for me; nay, so far from it, that aversion would quicken my sight,
and

‘and magnify every trifle to an enormous size : what, then, can be the consequence, but misery unspeakable ! My
‘too faithful memory is continually suggesting those days I spent in converse
‘with the young captain ; his engaging looks, his soothing voice and pleasing
‘language, are ever present to my remembrance, and aggravate the disgustful vanity, affectation, and bold address of my
‘unfeeling fop. Can he suppose that a rational, reflecting being, can be attached
‘to such an empty flutterer ? But, alas, he
‘knows not himself nor me, or he would
‘cease, from a principle of pride or humanity, to persecute me. Yet why should
‘I think of the amiable captain ? Perhaps, notwithstanding the grateful assurances he gave me, of ever esteeming
‘me, I may be forgotten by him. Solitude contributes to increase a particular
‘inclination, whilst liberty, and a diversity
‘of objects, have the opposite effect. O
‘fatal Gloucestershire journey ! How great
‘a loser am I returned ? deprived, as I am,

‘of an indulgent grandfather, and my
‘peace of mind!’

Mr. Finch having learned, from his brother lacquey, that the writings were finished, and to be signed as soon as Mr. Macpherson should return from a short excursion, he concluded he had no time to lose; and, as he was pre-determined not to discover himself, personally, to miss Fortescue, he wrote the following letter, and conveyed it into a book she was then reading.

MADAM,

‘**B**E assured, that you are now addressed
‘by a friend, a friend to your person,
‘your heart, and happiness. By means no
‘less extraordinary, than unnecessary to re-
‘late, this opportunity has been obtained
‘of apprizing you of your dangerous situa-
‘tion. Your fate, miss Fortescue, now
‘hangs but by a thread, and all the al-
‘ternative that remains for you is, to fly
‘your father’s house, or be wedded to
‘a sordid,

‘ a fordid, insensible wretch. I know too
‘ much of miss Fortescue’s disposition, not
‘ to be certain, that she will start, with
‘ equal horror, at each of the evils I have
‘ mentioned; but, at once to remove her
‘ fears and objections to delivering herself
‘ from a disaster which, if it takes place,
‘ can terminate only with her life, I will
‘ presume to give her the following advice :

‘ Lady Brightley is a woman of strict
‘ honor, reputation, and humanity, and
‘ will, undoubtedly, afford you a willing
‘ protection at this juncture. Solicit, there-
‘ fore, I conjure you, the friendship of this
‘ lady; tell her your motives for such a,
‘ seemingly, improper step; paint things
‘ only in their true colours, there needs no
‘ art to heighten your distress; and put
‘ your letter in the same place, to-mor-
‘ row morning, from whence you take this,
‘ and I will convey it to her ladyship.
‘ Intreat her to favour you with a speedy
‘ answer, that your proceedings may have
‘ the sanction of her ladyship’s approba-
‘ tion;

tion; and likewise insinuate, that, if she could recommend you to any female that would accompany you to her house, it would greatly add to her protecting favour. As your knowledge, madam, of this lady is but slight, and the affection of Mr. and Mrs. Finch for you most notorious, you may be surprized that a friend, acquainted with these particulars, should not advise you to apply to the latter. But, madam, Mr. Finch has a son, who is bold enough to hope, that there may be some happy event in store for him, that may encourage his public solicitation of your heart and hand. The world, in its conjectures, not only takes in probable, but improbable circumstances, and might conclude, that you sought an asylum at that gentleman's, to give you an opportunity of meeting the captain, and, likewise, that it was matter of design and pre-concertion between you. I, that know his heart, can assure you, he is as incapable of desiring you to listen to his addresses, clandestinely, as you can be of receiving them, and would as gladly

“gladly preserve you from every shadow of
“reflection, as I would. Hearken, there-
“fore, miss Fortescue, to friendship’s
“voice: your time is precious, improve it
“to advantage, and have a letter prepared,
“early to-morrow morning, for lady Bright-
“ley, which shall be infallibly conveyed, by

“your most sincerely attached,

and affectionate, &c.”

Miss Fortescue read this letter over and over, with astonishment, and found the advice it contained too just and interesting to be rejected, and prepared immediately to comply with it. When she began to write to lady Brightley, “I could,” said she, “be
“tempted to believe, that I am now acting
“agreeably to the direction of my guardian
“angel; for what earthly being could sug-
“gest such judicious instructions, to save
“me at once from ruin and censure?” She soon finished her petition to lady Brightley, which ran in the following terms:

G 4

“MADAM,

‘MADAM,

‘**Y**OUR ladyship’s character for hu-
‘manity and benevolence encourages
‘me to apply to you,’ in an uncommon
‘exigence, for your protection and favour.
‘My name is Caroline Fortescue, and, tho’
‘I am scarcely known to your ladyship,
‘yet I flatter myself you will be induced,
‘by the innate goodness of your disposi-
‘tion, to afford me an asylum at your seat,
‘for a short time. My father has provided
‘a husband for me, whose fortune is suffi-
‘cient to cover a multitude of follies. But,
‘alas, madam, what is fortune to a mind
‘unaccustomed to superfluity, and unac-
‘quainted with every species of refined ex-
‘travagance? Permit me to say, I feel an
‘unconquerable repugnance to loving this
‘man, and am reduced to the necessity of
‘flying, to avoid a, perhaps, well intended
‘violence. Whither can a young creature,
‘under such trying circumstances, fly, to
‘preserve her reputation unwounded, but to
‘a lady of your established, well-known pru-
‘dence? Had you a child in a similar situa-
‘tion,

* tion, friendless, and young, as I am, would
* you not press, with grateful lips, the
* hand that saved her from destruction?
* The poor old man, my grandfather, whose
* mortality is lodged in your village, would
* have blessed you for this action. A fond,
* long lost mother, had she been spared to
* me, would have joined in intreating you
* to shelter her beloved Caroline. Then,
* madam, be not deaf to the unassisted voice
* of a child, destitute of every happiness,
* who, by being intitled to a great fortune,
* inherits abundance of care and affliction,
* and is, by that alone, exposed to a persecu-
* tion you only can deliver her from. Please
* to direct your letter to be left at the ge-
* neral Post office, in Lombard street.

‘ I am, &c.’

Mr. Finch had the satisfaction to find, the ensuing morning, that his advice was not rejected, and diligently committed his Caroline's letter to the post. His fears, with respect to the baronet, had long been removed, by his father's informing him of

every transaction at Brightley; and, lest the amiable girl should not have represented her case in terms sufficient to excite lady Brightley's compassion, he enclosed her epistle in a frank, and added these few lines:

‘MADAM,

‘**T**HE dear girl that now casts herself
 ‘ upon your ladyship's protection, is
 ‘ threatened with no less an evil, than being
 ‘ compelled to marry both a weak and
 ‘ wicked wretch, and this merely to promote the private views of her avaricious
 ‘ father, and the ambition of the young
 ‘ man's aunt, a match between these cruel,
 ‘ designing persons, being previously concluded. Mr. and Mrs. Finch will make
 ‘ you sensible of the lady's merit, and, I
 ‘ dare believe, exert their utmost interest
 ‘ with your ladyship, to induce you to succour the distressed, amiable innocent.

‘ I am, madam, &c.’

These letters were no sooner read at Brightley, Mr. and Mrs. Finch being there,
 than

than it was concluded, that lady Brightley's woman should take a post-chaise, and conduct miss Fortescue to the hall. This good woman was the widow of an unfortunate sea officer, who died abroad, and left her with child, and in narrow circumstances. The few friends she had supported her in her lying-in, and, three months afterwards, recommended her to lady Brightley, to be wet-nurse to her son and heir. She was engaged for that purpose, and retained, at the expiration of that period, in the family, rather as an humble friend, than a servant. She buried her child at three years old, and, being destitute of relations, and her misfortunes having broken her friendly connexions, she gladly accompanied her lady to her retirement, where she passed a life of plenty, ease, and satisfaction.

As very little preparation was necessary, she set off that very afternoon, and reached London the next evening. Mrs. Finch most pathetically lamented the distress of

her little friend, and said, she should impatiently wait her arrival.

‘My dear,’ said the honest officer, ‘it
‘is an ill wind that blows no one good;
‘had Caroline escaped this persecution,
‘you would not have had the pleasure of
‘seeing her; so that, in my opinion, you
‘ought to consider this seeming evil as a
‘real good. As to her father, he is as
‘great a rascal as ever lived. Suppose,’
added he, merrily, ‘we order our boy
‘Charles to shoot him?’ ‘The wretch
‘that is unfit to live,’ said lady Brightley,
‘is but ill prepared for so important a
‘change as death; and it is only from a
‘want of due reflection, that we are tempt-
‘ed to wish the worthy part of our ac-
‘quaintance, or family, continued to us,
‘and the unworthy removed: for, surely,
‘we ought to sustain, without murmur-
‘ing, the greatest inconvenience imagin-
‘able, that would be beneficial to an im-
‘mortal being; for the bad man, by hav-
‘ing

ing his days lengthened out to him, may
be enabled to repent the evil of them."

Mr. Finch attended, at the proper hour, at the post-house, and, with heart-felt pleasure, received lady Brightley's answer to his beloved girl; and, that he might obtain some knowledge of the contents, inclosed it in a piece of paper, containing these words:

MADAM,

"I HAVE the double happiness of
finding my friendly advice unrejected
by you, and lady Brightley, I dare believe, propitious to your request; but, as
I shall ever be interested in the fate that
attends your undertakings, I must conjure you, by the little service I have rendered you, not to deny me the satisfaction
of knowing your future resolutions. If I
can be assistant, I will; if I cannot, my
good wishes shall await you: and may
you be the peculiar care of that Being,
who

“who is able to effect every great and good purpose.

“I am, &c.”

Miss Fortescue searched the repository of her invisible correspondent with great emotion, apprehensive lest she should be denied the request she had made to lady Brightley, her situation being now become very critical. Her father had, in a meeting the preceding evening, with the parties, appointed the wedding-day, and the mistress of his heart was invested with authority to make the nuptial preparations agreeable to her own inclinations. Her father had carried her, that very afternoon, to visit her aunt, as she was already stiled, who talked over the affair as a determination fixed as fate. Her heart was borne down by an uncommon weight, when her eye was most pleasingly saluted by lady Brightley's letter, which she eagerly opened, and found the contents run thus:

MADAM,

MADAM,

‘ **Y**OU have given my heart an un-
‘ speakable satisfaction, by choosing
‘ me for your guardian, and my house for
‘ your asylum. With how much pleasure
‘ I comply with your request, let the event
‘ justify. I have a person in whom I can
‘ confide, and one of my family, to conduct
‘ you. Hasten then to my protecting roof,
‘ nor destroy, by delay, what will be,
‘ when this letter reaches your hand, more
‘ than half accomplished. At the post-
‘ house in Lombard-street, she will await
‘ your coming, and set off instantly with
‘ you for a village where, notwithstanding
‘ the inhabitants are few, you have many
‘ friends. I will not only undertake your jus-
‘ tification with the world, but your recon-
‘ ciliation with your father also, nor shall
‘ you ever be delivered up, if I can prevent
‘ it, without your own consent. Mrs. Finch
‘ is impatient for your deliverance, as are
‘ many more I could name; therefore, good
‘ girl, disappoint us not, and we will en-
‘ deavour

“deavour, hereafter, to reconcile your
“duty and inclination.

“I am, &c.”

Miss Fortescue's fears immediately subsided, and she determined, to avoid suspicion, not to make the least preparation for her journey, but go off just as she was. She had, indeed, a few difficulties to encounter, and which were absolutely impracticable without the assistance of some trusty person: she was persuaded, that the letters she had received were conveyed into her book by her father's servant; but possibly, according to her judgment, he might be ignorant of the contents. To tamper with him, therefore, she feared would be dangerous, and betray a secret hitherto happily preserved. After many determinations and rejections, she resolved to apply to her unknown friend; and Rebecca being busied in her domestic concerns, she layed her book in its wonted place, though not unobserved by the diligent captain, who

who flew to peruse the little paper as soon as she withdrew.

‘ WHOEVER you are that have acted so friendly a part, by a young creature, at this juncture, very hard driven, I must intreat you to complete, by your kind and seasonable assistance, the charitable work you have began. I have received, from lady Brightley, a most encouraging letter, and she has been so considerate as to send a female servant, in whom, she says, she can confide, to attend my flight, a shocking phrase! but I need not palliate, since my motive is no other than escaping a horrid sacrifice. I would be glad to retreat this evening, as my father will sup out, could I, by any means, elude Rebecca’s vigilance, and have a hackney coach ready for my conveyance. If you, who have already done so much for me, can effect these two services, you will, indeed, be my deliverer, and may ever depend upon my utmost gratitude.’

The

The little commission miss Caroline requested, gave her lover the utmost consequence in his own eyes, and he was sensible he could easily accomplish the things she mentioned. ‘Alas,’ said he, ‘how vainly do I endeavour to divert my afflicted heart, in which I find love is stronger than reason! Notwithstanding the inevitable necessity of my being separated from miss Fortescue, my resolution is shaken by that one remembrance, that, in a few hours I shall no longer behold her. However weak I am in reflection, I will stand firm in action; it is the dear girl’s happiness has hitherto fixed my attention, and shall still fix it; nor will I prove myself so unworthy of that consideration for me, I hope hereafter to inspire her with, as not to be disinterested, and prefer her delicacy to every self gratification.’ Accordingly, with his wonted diligence, he agreed with a coachman, to take up miss Fortescue, as she desired, and formed a scheme to secure Mrs. Rebecca. He then deposited these lines of intelligence.

MADAM,

MADAM,

‘ I HAVE appointed a coach to be in
‘ waiting, at the top of the street, at seven
‘ o’clock. You may banish every appre-
‘ hension, as your Argus will be lulled into
‘ insensibility, by an irresistible charm.
‘ Your invisible friend finds his reward
‘ complete, in having effected the happy
‘ enterprize his heart was set upon, and
‘ will not forsake you, until he is an eye-
‘ witness of your joining lady Brightley’s
‘ servant, on whose care you may confi-
‘ dently rely. May every good angel guard
‘ you, and render your future days un-
‘ clouded and serene. Adieu.’

This note revived the half drooping
maid, and she counted the tedious hours
with both pleasure and pain. Her father
had her dutiful consideration, nor could
she reflect upon giving him uneasiness,
without wounding her own repose. ‘ How
‘ happy should I think myself,’ said she,
‘ were it possible for me to avoid the step
‘ I am about to take! but it is too, too
‘ great

‘great a sacrifice, to render all my future
‘days miserable, to satisfy only the parti-
‘cular humour of a parent. If the trying
‘hand of sickness were upon him, or was
‘he confined in a dismal prison, and my
‘compliance would remove the one, or
‘set him at liberty from the other, I think
‘I would not hesitate.’ Thus did she em-
ploy her thoughts until the appointed hour
arrived. Frank, it seems, had made Mrs.
Rebecca a present of a favourite cordial,
of which she had taken so plentiful a dose,
that, not only her young lady had an un-
interrupted opportunity of escaping, but
even the very house itself, might have
been removed, without danger of awaken-
ing her.

The captain having taken care that no
accident should happen either to his fellow
servant, or of fire, during his absence, follow-
ed miss Fortescue, at a convenient distance,
until she reached the coach, he then took
his post behind, and in a short time, arriv-
ed at the destined spot. Miss Caroline had
the

the precaution to send in for lady Brightley's woman, before she alighted, and knew her to be the very person, and then, without farther doubt, stepped into a post chaise and four, prepared for the purpose, which ran them twenty miles from town, where they slept securely, and the next day they reached the happy village.

Lady Brightley received her with the utmost kindness, and Mrs. Finch gave evident marks of a most unfeigned affection, for the lovely girl, and Mr. Finch told her, he little expected, at his time of life, to be drawn in to countenance a runaway daughter. Miss Caroline blushed, and even shed tears at this unexpected piece of raillery, and the humane Mr. Finch, was heartily concerned at having hurt her delicate mind.

‘Be assured,’ said he, ‘my dear, that
‘so far from condemning your conduct, I
‘highly applaud it, but it is owing to the
‘indiscretion alone of girls, who fly their
‘pa-

parent's, to rush into the arms of some giddy youth, or libertine, that has rendered a step of this sort so reproachful. I believe I am as nice in my notions as most men, (and men, in these respects, judge more severely than women) and yet I declare, that I should have thought my own child or sister, both justifiable and commendable, for such an action. 'You wound me sir, with one hand,' returned miss Fortescue, 'and with the other, hold out the healing balm of approbation. Had not the step I have taken been my last resource, I should despise myself for it, but as it is, I hope I shall be acquitted by the world, and justified by my own heart. But pray,' added she, 'which of my friends will take the trouble of informing my father, I am safe and well, and ready to obey every injunction he would impose, but that dreadful one of matrimony?' 'Very pretty, truly,' said Mr. Finch, 'that is as much as to say, if your father will permit you to follow your own inclination

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“In material things, you will be all obedience in trifles. Well, but” continued the good man, “I will tell you for your comfort, if you are a good girl at heart, to your mortification if you are a bad one, that your history, literally related, will be hissed by the generality of novel readers, and novel writers, as those people have no conception of an elopement from a detested lover, without a favoured one to fly to. Then your solicitude concerning your father’s ease, and desire that he should be made acquainted with your safety, and conditional obedience, are circumstances that would cloud, instead of illustrating, the narrative. A whining hero, and a repenting timid heroine, are ridiculous characters.” “Miss Fortescue’s request,” said lady Brightley, “has too much reason, propriety, and becoming duty in it, not to be complied with. As by doing me the favour of putting herself under my protection, she has given me authority to act the part of both guardian
“and

‘and friend, I myself will address, and
‘endeavour to reconcile, her father to her
‘compulsive flight.’ ‘You are all good-
‘ness, madam,’ returned the young lady :
‘and as my father is intitled to an account,
‘nay, in every respect but the present,
‘the *direction* of my actions, the earliest
‘notice is undoubtedly due to him.’ ‘I
‘will, this moment, relieve your mind,’
said lady Brightley, ‘from an anxiety that
‘does honor to it.’ So saying, she rang
the bell, and ordering a servant to accom-
modate her with writing materials, she soon
dispatched the ensuing epistle to Mr. For-
tescue.

SIR,

‘**T**HOUGH a stranger to your per-
‘son, I have long been acquainted
‘with your character and family, and flat-
‘ter myself, that, whatever resentment
‘you may feel, on the first perusal of this
‘application, will, on cool, candid reflec-
‘tion, perfectly subside. You, Mr. For-
‘tescue,

rescue, are the father of a most valuable,
and, notwithstanding a late step, I will
be bold to say, dutiful child. Her re-
pugnance to your commands, cannot be
deemed disobedience, as she was incapa-
ble of complying with them. You had
chosen for her husband, a man, (how-
ever unexceptionable in your sight) whom
her heart rejected, consequently, in her
sentiments, an alliance with him and
happiness was incompatible. The hasty
displeasure of an opposed parent, and the
timidity of an affectionate well disposed
child, I can easily conceive, and make due
allowance for (I myself sir, am a parent) the
one apprehends rebellion, the other per-
secution; and you must give me leave to
say, that arbitrary power is equally sub-
ject to error, as meek and reasonable op-
position to blame. Your child, sir, only
desires a bare negative in a point whereon
all her peace and felicity is dependent;
she sets up no will of her own against
you, nor has she presumed to make a
clandestine, indiscreet choice. She has,
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indeed, flown from your house, but her
flight was single; no giddy lover to assist,
no unworthy confident to impel her to
the commission of an action, that would
have blasted your every hope and expectation. She has put herself under the
protection of those friends her merit gave
her, during her residence at Brightley,
and has engaged them unanimously to
reconcile her beloved father to her. We
all, sir, believe that the happy establishment
of this lovely girl, was your aim
and intention. How dreadful then would
a disappointment have proved, when the
worm of discontent had destroyed the
bloom that now adorns your Caroline's
cheeks, when languishment had superseded
the healthful sparkle of her eye, and
her decaying frame undeniably, though
too late, convinced you, that the affections
of the heart, those essentials to happiness,
are beyond the reach of parental authority,
or even the command of the possessor
for herself! These considerations must
have weight, and induce you to approve

‘ the part I now act of mediator, and I will
‘ add, preserver of your peace in that of
‘ your child’s.

‘ You may depend upon all due care be-
‘ ing taken of miss Caroline, and I shall be
‘ glad to receive a convincing proof from
‘ your own hands, that I have not mistak-
‘ en your character, in concluding you to
‘ be a man of understanding and humanity,
‘ and an affectionate and tender parent.

‘ I am sir, &c.’

Her ladyship having read this letter to the friendly circle, by whom it was generally approved, she sealed and committed the conveyance of it to the care of a messenger appointed for the more speedy dispatch, the post going from the village only every other day. Miss Fortescue’s self-confidence began to revive by the kind encouragement of her friends, and she waited her father’s answer to lady Brightley’s ad-

dress, with as much composure as could be expected.

Mrs. Rebecca had no sooner slept off her dose, than she revisited her dominion, the kitchen, and found Mr. Frank profoundly sleeping in a wicker chair, that adorned the chimney corner. His sleep was, indeed, unfeigned, for he had so fatigued both his body and mind, in effecting miss Fortescue's deliverance, and impaired his rest for many preceding nights, that, when he returned from Lombard-street, his happy accomplishment of his honest designs, had inspired him with such a heart-felt satisfaction, that he insensibly yielded to a repose, calm and refreshing, as that enjoyed by the peaceful babe. He had so far recommended himself, by his diligence and industry, to Mrs. Rebecca's respectful consideration, that she moved with the utmost caution, from an unwillingness to disturb him; and, as it was then near eleven o'clock, as she saw nor heard any thing of miss Caroline, she concluded
she

she was gone to bed; and took her place opposite her fellow servant, to wait her master's return from his evening's engagement.

Between twelve and one, the counsellor roused his domestics, by a loud rap at the door, and having gained admittance, instantly went to bed, in order to relieve his heated brain. Frank sunk into his truckle repository, and Mrs. Rebecca, after having spent much time in devotion, and once more comforted her heart with her beloved cordial, retired also.

☞ If my reader has never seen Macbeth, it will be impossible for him or her, to figure to their imagination, the witch-like aspect of this house-keeper, when, on entering her apartment, she found the curtains of miss Caroline's bed undrawn, and the bed unoccupied, by that lovely maid.

Her deep repeated yells, penetrated her master's ears, notwithstanding the opiate

he had taken, was in its first, and consequently, strongest operations. Alarmed and terrified as he was, by the uncommon and dreadful wailings of his favourite, he had not the resolution to quit his chamber, but rang his bell with the utmost violence, in order to obtain a safe, and speedy information.

Rebecca, overcome with her fright, suffered her master to continue some time in horror and suspense, but on recovering her presence of mind, she obeyed his summons with unabated squalling, until she reached his room door; when the counsellor cried out, 'What is the matter Rebecca? What can be the meaning of all this confusion?' 'O, sir,' replied the frightened virgin, 'if you will be so kind as to open the door, I will, on my knees, reveal the whole fact.' 'Good Heavens!' said Mr. Fortescue, 'what fact have you committed? I believe, woman, you have lost your senses.' 'O, sir,' returned she, 'I wish it were no worse, but miss Caroline'----- At the mention of that name,
our

our pleader became a new man, the fumes of wine were banished, by his stronger fear. 'Good Rebecca, tell me,' said he, flying to the door, and opening it, 'tell me what has happened to Caroline!' 'Ah, sir,' said Rebecca, 'I beseech you to pardon me, and believe me innocent, but miss Caroline is gone!' 'Out of my way, woman,' said the enraged counsellor (at the same time pushing her down) 'gone! where? when? how? oh, the wicked, sly, designing hussy! but she is what her mother was before her! she had a blessed example!'

How ungenerous this reflection was I leave the judgment of to my readers; but such is the ingratitude of man, that he ever condemns female impropriety, notwithstanding it may be merely the result of affection for him, or compliance with his repeated solicitations.

Rebecca got up as well as she was able, having received no small hurt by her fall.

and followed her master's footsteps. 'I
' suppose,' said Mr. Fortescue, 'she is
' gone off with that vile fellow, Frank, and
' I shall have a scandalous brat to main-
' tain; but I will hang the dog, that he
' may depend on.' The captain was pre-
pared for a visit, by Mrs. Rebecca's out-
cry, doubting not but their suspicions would
fall upon him; but when the counsellor,
attended by his faithful house-keeper, en-
tered the garret, and found Frank in a
counterfeit sleep, his astonishment was infi-
nitely increased. 'This is, indeed, a master
stroke,' said he, 'but I suppose, fellow,
' you have been the go-between, the let-
' ter-carrier, and can inform me what
' wretch has been weak enough to bring
' himself to the gallows, for intriguing
' with my daughter?' The captain affected
great surprise, and protested, he was in-
nocent of the charge, and did not know
of any gentleman's being gone off with
miss Caroline, nor that any one intended
it. 'Deceive me at your peril, rascal,'
said Mr. Fortescue, 'your confession may
avail

‘avail you, but be assured, I will punish
‘you with the severest rigour, unless you
‘discover all you know.’ ‘Lord, sir,’
said the captain, ‘how should you suppose
‘miss Caroline would accept my poor
‘assistance? why Mrs. Rebecca knows I
‘have never been concerned in any in-
‘triguing, nor have I any head for it. I
‘am sure if you knew all, sir, you would
‘not suspect me.’ ‘I’ll search this affair
‘to the bottom,’ said the enraged lawyer,
darting a furious look, ‘and if you have
‘been any way assisting, it had been better
‘for you never to have been born.’ He
then rushed out of the garret, attended
by the trembling Rebecca.

His ambitious views thus counterwork-
ed, was a severe stroke to him; and
though he returned to his bed, he found
no repose. There was not the least clue
by which to trace the run-away; and
should a marriage be effected between his
daughter and an unworthy wretch, the re-
venge he should be able to take afterwards,

would be, by no means, adequate to the desire of his heart, as three years would give her an indisputable claim to her fortune. In this state of perplexity, he continued all that night, and was denied to every one the next day; when Frank was sent one way, and Rebecca another, to enquire at the inns, in order to gain some intelligence concerning her. This parent was very unwilling his daughter's elopement should transpire, until he had concerted some certain means, lest it should prevent his match with Mrs. Swinton taking place. He began, upon reflection, to flatter himself, that if his daughter had made an imprudent choice, and he could fright her into advantageous concessions, to obtain his forgiveness, he might be still able to carry that desired point. He indeed, regretted, that, in losing Mr. Macpherson, he should lose his fortune; but he wisely imagined, that Mrs. Swinton would, with less scruple, join in defrauding a stranger, than her own nephew. A very poor compliment to his proceedings, who was studying the destruction
of

of a child. He was reduced to the necessity, the second day of miss Caroline's absence, of inventing twenty excuses to disengage himself from visiting Mrs. Swinton, and on the third day, lady Brightley's epistle renewed all his grievance. To find his daughter withdrawn from his protection, and in such safe and honourable hands, no husband in the case, no indiscretion to charge her with, was a mortifying circumstance he little expected. However, deceit being a prompt principle in his heart, it suggested to him, that, by appearing satisfied with his daughter's conduct, and yielding, as it were, to the persuasions of her friends, he might once more allure her into his power, and then deal with her as he thought proper. In obedience to this prudent monitor, he wrote as follows.

MADAM,

I Profess myself infinitely obliged to you, both for your kind reception of, and friendly expostulations, with respect

'to my late treatment of my perverse
 'girl. I believe I did not give the matter
 'due consideration, nor can I, even as a
 'father, experience the tender delicacies,
 'and nice distinctions, by which your lady-
 'ship's maternal heart is informed. Men
 'have not those refinements in their rough-
 'er natures; but I, nevertheless, have so
 'much of the father, as to love my girl,
 'to seek her felicity, and never more offer
 'violence to her inclination. I give up my
 'views to your solicitations, and if you,
 'madam, will take upon you to say I can,
 'I am willing to, receive a dutiful child
 'from your hands; dutiful in every other
 'respect, but the matrimonial. The sooner
 'she returns, the more agreeable.

'I am, madam, &c.

Having committed this letter to the
 post, our counsellor made a visit to his in-
 tended lady, and, as he could no longer
 conceal it, he made her acquainted with
 his daughter's elopement. Mrs. Swinton
 was

was greatly mortified, and lent, after that intelligence, an unwilling ear to Mr. Fortescue's love professions. 'I am sorry, 'fir,' said she, 'that our connection must 'be interrupted, but as the only terms, on 'which I could have received you, seem 'impracticable, you must excuse me, if 'I desire you to desist your visits.'

The counsellor was thunderstruck at this speech, but being a man of the most prudent composure, where his interest was concerned, he gravely intreated the lady to postpone the sentence of banishment, until she saw what could be done with his daughter, on her return: 'I may expect every thing,' said he, 'from 'her docility of temper, but it will be 'dangerous to drive her to extremities, as 'she can command the management of 'her whole fortune, the day she is of 'age. Had she made an improper choice, 'in all probability, I should have reaped 'more advantage, than if she was even 'given to your nephew. But, we shall
'be

'be better able to judge in some short
'time; only, madam, in the interim, de-
'prive me not of the happiness of seeing
'you.' Mrs. Swinton's characteristic be-
ing that of good nature, she yielded to
the counsellor's importunity, and restored
his satisfaction of heart, by a promise of
receiving his future visits.

END OF BOOK IV.



BOOK



B O O K V.

MISS Fortescue and miss Stevens soon contracted a friendship; from similarity of disposition, and equality of age. The former sighed for the captain, the latter for the baronet; but were restrained from communicating the soft inclination of their hearts, even to each other, from a principle of delicacy inseparable to the mind of the retired, modest virgin.

Brightley was, by no means, the agreeable place miss Caroline had known it; in her imagination, the *woods were all lonely, the melody gone*; roses became less fair, less sweet, than when blushing beneath the eye, and gathered by the valued hand, of
the

the youthful captain. The road from the village to Mr. Johnson's farm was her favourite walk, as it concurred to revive many pleasing recollections of that tender declaration Mr. Finch had there entertained her with, of his affection for her. She secretly wished his return during her continuance in the country, but despaired of enjoying so great a happiness. Her fair friend's thoughts were wholly engrossed by the handsome baronet; his understanding and politeness equally engaged her approbation; his behaviour to his mother, his strong and generous attachment to her brother, were irresistible charms, and the whole world appeared as nothing in her sight, in competition with that amiable youth.

She had now been two months at Brightley, during which time the baronet continued sullen, and almost inaccessible to his friend, who was alarmed and afflicted at the unexpected change. 'How little dependence,' he would say to Miss Shelburne,

burne, 'ought we to have upon the human
'heart! To-day it approves, and overflows
'with the grateful professions of friendship
'and affection; to-morrow it is disgusted,
'it knows not why, becomes cold, reserved,
'and disingenuous, and, by preventing an
'eclaircissement with its wonted favourite,
'obstructs every means of being unde-
'ceived, disabused, and reconciled. Who
'would have imagined that I, who seemed
'so entirely possessed of Sir William Bright-
'ley's esteem, should fall into disgrace,
'unconscious of having offended, and re-
'main uninformed of my offence? But I
'will persevere in a patient submission to
'this strange, newly assumed humour, and
'convince him, that integrity of heart is a
'never-failing support.'

'Sir William,' returned Miss Shelburne,
'is, in this instance, an undeniable evi-
'dence, that even the utmost good sense is
'fallible, and that error and perfection is
'so interwoven in our nature, as to be in-
'separable, and with ourselves, indistin-
'guishable.'

‘guishable. I dare believe this young gentle-
 ‘man fancies himself perfectly right in his
 ‘conduct, and has some imaginary good
 ‘reason for this shyness and resentment,
 ‘which time will, doubtless, unravel.’

The baronet enjoyed as little tranquility
 as his friend, from the alteration in his dis-
 position. He perceived, he despised the
 inconsistency he was guilty of, in retaining
 an unabated friendship for Mr. Stevens,
 yet excluding him from a knowledge of his
 heart, shunning his company, and disliking
 his conversation. He would enter the par-
 lor resolved to atone for his past unkind-
 ness, by proofs of repentance, and re-at-
 tachment; but found himself incapable of
 acting such a part as he himself could ap-
 prove, and would quit the room abruptly,
 and make fresh resolutions, which he was
 equally unable to adhere to. ‘Surely,’ he
 would say, ‘I am a slave to false honor; I
 ‘am under no engagement to prefer miss
 ‘Stevens; why do I, then, create these
 ‘difficulties, and constrain myself, with re-
 spect

‘spect to acknowledging I am at last be-
‘come a lover? But I know not who the
‘lady is, whence she comes, or what con-
‘nexions she has; and, perhaps, the first
‘fruit of my affectionate declaration would
‘be the afflicting discovery, that she is des-
‘tined for young Finch, and that they are
‘speedily to be united by a sacred rite,
‘which may strengthen, but cannot in-
‘crease, their long, long engaged esteem.
‘I cannot bear this torturing suspense.
‘Had I but the courage, the justice, to
‘give Stevens a share in my distress, my
‘doubts would soon be dispelled: he would
‘inform himself, and me, of every particu-
‘lar I could wish to know, and sooth my
‘soul to peace, by his unanswerable reason-
‘ing, and gentle persuasions. I will in-
‘stantly seek him, obtain his pardon for
‘the late effects of my weakness and folly,
‘and solicit his friendly assistance, to re-
‘store me to my wonted cheerfulness, and
‘heart-felt satisfaction. This method, I
‘know, by experience, I am unable to pur-
‘sue:---but, if I cannot speak, I can
‘write---

' write---Happy suggestion! Yes, I can,
 ' by letter, reveal my every thought---I
 ' will catch, as it were, this inclination,
 ' nor give myself, by reflection, an increase
 ' of mortification.' At this instant, having
 the necessary materials about him, he
 thus discharged his mind of its sentiments,
 attachments, doubts, waverings, and every
 species of love-born perplexity; which he
 had no sooner compleated, than he depo-
 sited it under the covering of his friend's
 bed:

' DEAR FRANK,

' **I** S it possible that you can be a stranger
 ' to the agitations of your friend's
 ' heart? by penetration alone, I should
 ' imagine, you would detect me; but even
 ' sympathy is dull, nor informs you, that
 ' your friend is, at last, caught in similar
 ' toils, by which you have been long en-
 ' tangled. O, Stevens, I conjure you to
 ' recollect the part I took in your suffer-
 ' ings, how I always lent a willing ear to
 ' your complaints, acquired every informa-
 ' tion

tion I thought could be serviceable to
you, and sincerely wished you happily
united to the object of your best affec-
tions. Had I been capable, with what
pleasure would I have obstructed every
impediment, and opened a successful path
to the attainment of your wishes! Some
difficulties I did obviate, and it is now,
indirectly, by my means, that you en-
joy the continued felicity of entertaining
the woman you love. I mention not these
particulars as taxes upon your gratitude,
but in order to induce you to pity, and
spare me.

You remember how long I entertained
a desire to see your sister, how strongly I
was prepossessed in her favour, and what
satisfaction I promised myself, in calling
you brother; but those days are now no
more! a stranger has made that conquest
I would have reserved for her, and sup-
planted her image in my heart. I no
longer sigh from an imaginary cause, not-
withstanding all is uncertain around me:

I fear

‘ I fear young Finch has a prior claim to
‘ the object of my admiration; nor am I so
‘ despicable, as to even wish to purchase
‘ my happiness at the expence of his. Far
‘ gone, as I feel I am, I would not receive
‘ her lovely hand but in conjunction with
‘ her heart, nor constitute an angel, lady
‘ Brightley, unless love, alone, could in-
‘ duce her acceptance of me. I have no-
‘ thing to fear from you; you see with
‘ other eyes than mine. I conjure you,
‘ then, by our past friendship, to become
‘ my advocate; tell her how greatly I
‘ esteem her, solicit her tender approbation
‘ for me; but be sure, above all things, to
‘ make yourself acquainted with the true
‘ state of her inclinations. If you can, upon
‘ enquiry, and conversing with her, give
‘ me the happy assurance, that her heart is
‘ free from every impression, you will, in-
‘ deed, speak my felicity. My youth sub-
‘ jects me to this violence of passion; you
‘ know I am not a sensualist; her mind, as
‘ well as person, has engaged me, and, I
‘ fear, too much of my peace is dependant
‘ upon

‘ upon her favour. But let me not forget
‘ my best of mothers, she has a right to be
‘ consulted, who has ever consulted my
‘ ease. The eye that has watched me from
‘ my earliest existence, with the most ten-
‘ der anxiety, shall never shed a tear at my
‘ indiscrete choice. She shall have a daugh-
‘ ter, when I have a wife; nor would I sacri-
‘ fice her repose to make myself an em-
‘ peror. The heart that has ever beat with
‘ maternal tenderness, shall never be wound-
‘ ed by its darling object.

‘ Can you, Stevens, can you guess by
‘ whom this change in my disposition is
‘ wrought? or is it necessary for me to men-
‘ tion Mr. Finch’s fair visitor? I give up
‘ my connexion with your family with re-
‘ gret; I wish your amiable sister a more
‘ valuable and steady lover, and shall still
‘ rejoice in, and endeavour to strike out the
‘ means of, her and your good mother’s
‘ felicity. Suffer not your regard for me
‘ to be diminished, by my involuntary
‘ falling off in one particular, but remem-
‘ ber

'ber what you yourself have endured on
 'the amiable miss Shelburne's account.
 'You cannot jest at woes yourself have felt.
 'putting your natural generosity of heart
 'out of the question. Interest yourself,
 'therefore, in the cause of your once loved
 'friend; a cause, on the success of which
 'is hinged his peace, his happiness, and
 'life.

'Adieu, my worthy Stevens.'

By some unlucky chance the letter slipped under the bolster, and was unperceived by Mr. Stevens. The family at the hall dined the next day, by engagement, at Mr. Finch's, and, in the afternoon, repaired into the garden. Sir William had avoided meeting his friend's eyes all the day, and resolved not to declare his passion for the young lady, until he had received an answer to his letter.

The tea and coffee were ordered to be conveyed to a little summer-house, situated on a mount; from whence, having spent some

hours in friendly chat, they all descended, and, as the gardens were large, each took the route most agreeable to their fancy. The fair friends, and the baronet, separated themselves from the wiser multitude; but soon, miss Fortescue, instructed by love alone, discovered the secret inclinations of the youthful pair, and, very good naturedly, dropped them, in a winding alley, to give them an opportunity of conversing without a witness, and herself the liberty of indulging some particular reflections. The baronet, and miss Stevens, were so deeply engaged in contemplating the beauties of nature, that they were got at some distance from the seat on which miss Fortescue had reposed herself, before they were sensible they had lost her company. Sir William first made the pleasing, unexpected discovery, when miss Stevens immediately proposed returning to seek for her; but the baronet easily persuaded the credulous maid, that she had given them the slip in order to divert herself with alarming them, and had, doubtless, joined the other

party. 'If, madam,' continued this young gentleman, 'you dare trust yourself under my conduct, we shall rejoin them at the termination of this little labyrinth, in which I cannot mislead you, if I was so disposed.' 'I, sir,' returned miss Stevens, 'am so far from being suspicious, that I have great confidence in your protection.' 'If you knew my heart, madam,' replied the baronet, with some confusion, 'you would not doubt my being well affected towards you. But who can behold so charming an object without admiration?'

The little maze, in which our lovers were got together, was composed of such short windings, that it was possible for any person to be at a convenient distance for overhearing a conversation, without being discovered. Mr. Stevens and miss Shelburne had, undesignedly, struck into this intricate track, just as the baronet uttered the words above inserted, which they distinctly heard. 'The plot begins to thicken,' whispered miss Shelburne, smiling; 'I have long-suspect-

ed

‘ed this; if we are but dexterous we shall
‘hear it unfolded.’

‘I, madam,’ resumed sir William, ‘was
‘free from a variety of sensations I now
‘experience, until I had the pleasure of
‘beholding you. It was not merely a face
‘that could attract me; but my heart has
‘proved unable to resist the united charms
‘of person and mind.’

Miss Stevens felt a pleasing sensibility at
the baronet’s profession; but, notwithstanding
she wished him to declare himself more
largely, she had not the courage to promote
the subject. Sir William was silent, she
was distressed, and enquired, with a view
to conceal her disorder, how far the la-
byrinth extended?

‘It is infinitely too limited,’ returned
the lover, ‘to permit me to describe the
‘tender inclination you have inspired me
‘with. This is a casual and unexpected
‘opportunity, and, madam, let me intreat

‘you to render it a happy one, by conde-
‘scending to resolve the single question,
‘whether you are engaged, or not, in your
‘affections?’ ‘My life, sir William,’ re-
plied miss Stevens ‘(exclusive of my jour-
‘ney to Brightley) has hitherto been such
‘as has secluded me from all society with
‘men of breeding and merit; consequent-
‘ly, whatever natural susceptibility I may
‘be endued with, has been unawakened.
‘But you, sir, have not been so confined
‘in your travels; not only the fine faces
‘of England, but even those of France
‘and Italy have been familiar to your eyes.
‘Excuse me, then, if I impute the high
‘compliment you have paid me, to polite-
‘ness alone.’ ‘I will,’ said the baronet,
‘to remove every doubt of my sincerity,
‘with your permission, lay my whole heart
‘open to you.

‘Some few years ago, I was as much
‘unacquainted with your sex, as you can
‘possibly be with mine. Brightley, the
‘place of my nativity, had retained my
‘unwil-

unwilling residence, from my birth until that period, and denied me the satisfaction I have since enjoyed. I, indeed, conceived an imaginary attachment to the sister of my friend Stevens, from the description I received of her; that impression preserved my heart from every foreign attack, and I believed myself fixed in the resolution of visiting that young lady, and soliciting her acceptance of my heart: but miss Stevens's image is perfectly erased from my breast, since I became acquainted with you; I no longer remember her acknowledged merit, and resemblance to my handsome friend, but find, in your corporeal and mental accomplishment, all that is fair, lovely, and valuable.

Miss Stevens was thunderstruck by this last speech, and was about to discover her name to the baronet; when her brother, suspecting her design, emerged, with miss Shelburne, from their concealment, and no less surprized, than mortified, the lovers.

Miss Shelburne rallied them with great goodnature and politeness, on their having strolled from the company, into such a retired walk; and it was some time before the baronet could so far recover himself, as to return the compliment. They then returned, by joint consent, by the way sir William and miss Stevens had came, in order to find miss Fortescue, who had not quitted her rural seat during their absence, and excused herself for having played them such a slippery trick, by complaining of a slight head-ach. Mr. Stevens enjoyed the highest satisfaction from the discovery he had made, which he had not an opportunity of informing lady Brightley of that night. At supper they were very gay, Mr. Finch exerting his utmost good-humour for the entertainment of his friends, who did not take their leave until a late hour, and, on their arrival at the hall, they instantly retired to their respective apartments.

Mr.

Mr. Stevens found the baronet's letter laid upon his table by the house-maid, who mentioned the place, with surprise, where she had found it. Mr. Stevens no sooner perused the contents, than he conceived the manner of the accident, and impatiently expected the morning. His heart was agitated by a variety of passions, occasioned from the various descriptions in the epistle; surprise was succeeded by mortification, mortification by compassion, compassion by resentment, resentment by satisfaction, &c. &c. But the certainty of his friend's affection for his sister, made amends for every thing. 'I shall, at last,' said he, 'have a brother in my beloved friend, my sister a generous husband, and my mother, a noble, meritorious son.' Miss Shelburne participated, by sympathy, in Mr. Stevens's felicity, and passed the night in pleasing contemplations. Lady Brightley, ignorant of all that had happened, enjoyed her accustomed serenity, without addition or alloy. Sir William eagerly sought for an answer from his friend, at least to approve

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his

his flame, if not encourage it, and was greatly chagrined at his disappointment. He slept little, but consoled himself with the soothing hope of not being disagreeable to his admired fair-one. 'She evidently 'seemed,' said he, 'rather to doubt the 'sincerity of my affection for her, than offended at the declaration of it. The interruption of Stevens and miss Shelburne 'was very unseasonable.'

Miss Fortescue spent some short time in lamenting the unhappy perverseness of her fate, compelled, as she was, to fly her father's house, to avoid the man she hated, and misfortune at not meeting with the man she loved; reflections which cost her several sighs, and by no means contributed to her repose. Miss Stevens was puzzled, to the last degree, by reflecting upon the baronet's mysterious conversation. To love her, as the sister of his friend, and, when imagining her a stranger, to contract such regard for her, delighted, perplexed, pleased, and mortified her. She conceived the

the baronet was destined for miss Fortescue, which rather occasioned a coldness towards that lovely girl in her heart; and she persuaded herself, she would not encourage her own growing inclination for him, until that doubt was removed. She judged, from his generosity to her brother, that he was incapable of being biassed by pecuniary considerations; but, when her imagination enumerated the many merits miss Fortescue possessed, she saw but little reason to hope, that the youthful baronet should behold her with indifference. Sleep, however, at length, subdued all her suspicions and jealousy, by his all-healing hand, and, by displaying a soft, flattering scene, fancy compensated all her sufferings.

In the morning, Mr. Stevens arose earlier than his usual custom, in order to obtain an audience from lady Brightley, without her son's knowledge. Miss Stevens was with her ladyship when he was admitted into her dressing-room; and he put sir William's letter into her hand, without

15 either

either preface or apology. This affectionate mother was not able to go through the contents unaffected, and begged Mr. Stevens to read it aloud. When he had done, 'It is a painful pleasure to me,' said her ladyship, 'to be acquainted with my son's inclinations without undeceiving him; we will no longer torment him; I, therefore, intreat you, immediately to reveal all our scheme to him, our reasons for making this tryal of his heart, and tell him, we congratulate both him and ourselves on its success.' Mr. Stevens obeyed her ladyship's commands, and wrote as follows:

'MY DEAR SIR,

'PRESUMING upon the generosity of your disposition, and in order to discover the real and unbiaſſed ſentiments of your heart, I do confeſs I have been drawn in to practice much deceit towards you, and yet am bold enough to flatter myſelf, you will remit my tranſgreſſion. Know, then, that the lady who has, happily, engaged your admiration and eſteem,

‘esteem, is no other than Fanny Stevens,
‘the beloved sister of that man who is un-
‘der such infinite obligations to you. My
‘grandfather has bid good night to this
‘lower world, and, poor man, though late,
‘relented, and bestowed a provision upon
‘us, far beyond our humble expectations;
‘my sister is now entitled to eighteen thou-
‘sand pounds. Believe me, sir, her for-
‘tune has no other weight with me, than
‘as it may serve to convince your relations
‘and guardians, that, notwithstanding you
‘have long honoured a dependent, penny-
‘less being with your friendship and coun-
‘tenance, you have not chosen a beggar
‘for your wife. The nobleness of your dis-
‘position, your understanding and sobriety,
‘are, with me, more valuable recommenda-
‘tions, than your title and fortune; and I
‘would much rather be allied to the one,
‘than intitled to the other. Fanny’s appro-
‘bation of you is apparent, through the
‘all proper disguises of virgin modesty: she
‘must, indeed, have been blind, had she
‘remained unsusceptible of the uncommon

‘ qualifications you are master of. This
‘ was my apprehension, when you expres-
‘ sed a desire of engaging Mr. Finch to
‘ give my mother and her an invitation to
‘ Brightley; I borrowed the hint from
‘ you, and hope you will pardon an inno-
‘ cent stratagem, which you yourself sug-
‘ gested to my imagination. Lady Bright-
‘ ley, in conjunction with miss Shelburne,
‘ Mr. and Mrs. Finch, have been aiding
‘ and assisting. The poor girl and your-
‘ self, were alone, ignorant of our designs.
‘ We have complimented each other, in
‘ very high terms, on our newly discovered
‘ talent for plotting, the success of our un-
‘ dertaking incontestably evincing, even in
‘ the most rigid judgement, our skill and
‘ abilities. If we are so happy as to be ac-
‘ quitted by you, we shall greatly rejoice;
‘ judge, then, how your applause would
‘ exalt us! I am, with the most unfeigned
‘ respect and regard,

‘ your most obedient, &c.’

A fer-

A servant was dispatched with this epistle to the baronet, who received it with a trembling hand. On examining its contents, he doubted of the reality of his existence, fancied all around him was delusion, and, in short, was as romantic in his imagination, as any hero upon antient record could be. When his surprise began to subside, and he was capable of recalling his scattered reason, he ordered the servant to tell Mr. Stevens, he should be glad to see him for a few moments. No sooner was the message delivered, than that gentleman flew to the apartment of his friend. 'I hope,' said Mr. Stevens, on entering the room, 'I have not deceived myself with vain expectations, but that my patron and benefactor is disposed to give me my accustomed share in his valued friendship, and heart?'

'Stevens,' returned the baronet, taking him by the hand, 'you ought to know my disposition; my affection for you was undiminished, even at the moment I shunned

‘shunned you most. Be assured I could as
‘soon cease to exist, as disesteem you, and
‘that I have my every wish accomplished,
‘in being enabled to confirm my late attach-
‘ment, by a brotherly alliance, and in receiv-
‘ing your worthy parent for my second mo-
‘ther. Do flatter me, I am now disposed to
‘take large draughts. Tell me I am not dis-
‘agreeable to your amiable sister; that she
‘consents to unite her fate with mine, and
‘that it shall not be long before our happy
‘union shall be compleated. When shall
‘I be introduced to her? Is she not to be
‘informed of all your proceedings? Will
‘not your mother visit us, and confer her
‘approbation upon me, before the indis-
‘soluble knot is tied? Answer me all these
‘questions, my brother and my friend!’ ‘I
‘have now an opportunity,’ said Mr. Ste-
‘vens, ‘of taking a most pleasing revenge
‘upon you, for the raillery you once played
‘off upon me, and of laughing at the ena-
‘moured baronet in turn; but I will spare
‘you, and beg you may no longer absent
‘your-

“yourself from a place where your company is impatiently expected.”

They immediately repaired to the breakfast chamber, where they were no sooner arrived than, “My son,” said the delighted lady Brightley, “this is, indeed, a happy day! I approve miss Stevens as much as you can admire her, and shall, with unfeigned pleasure, receive and bless my long-elected, worthy daughter. May years of uninterrupted felicity await you, nor the miserable fate of an early separation attend you!” “O my mother,” said sir William, “had you not been propitious to my choice, I must still have been wretched! for it is your consent alone can stamp happiness on a design of this nature. You will, I hope, love your daughter, from the united incitements of her great merit, as a woman, and tenderness, faith, and affection, as a wife. How my aunt will be brought to approve our intentions, I know not, but I suppose it will not be necessary to consult her.” “You shall,”
“my

‘my dear,’ returned lady Brightley, ‘pay
 ‘her the compliment to invite her and her
 ‘husband to your wedding; if she declines
 ‘the invitation, you have no want of duty
 ‘or respect to accuse yourself with. She
 ‘is your father’s sister, a consideration
 ‘which ought so far to cancel the remem-
 ‘brance of the weak side of her character,
 ‘as to prevent your sullying yours, by a
 ‘deficiency on your part.’

Miss Fortescue sighed at this happy
 scene; not from envy, as that was a pas-
 sion her gentle bosom was unacquainted
 with, but from the painful reflection of
 the different composition of her father’s
 heart, to this good lady’s.

Sir William hastily dispatched his break-
 fast, and, stealing from the company, flew
 to Mr. Finch’s. ‘My good friend,’ said
 he, ‘I have many things to thank you
 ‘for; I have had a mystery unravelled to
 ‘me this morning, in the composing of
 ‘which, I understand, you was a princi-
 ‘pal

‘pal agent. I have declared my love, my
‘mother her approbation, and, I am en-
‘couraged to hope, miss Stevens will not
‘withhold her confirming voice, as, on that
‘alone, our whole felicity is dependant.
‘Pray, sir, where is the lady?’

‘O dear sir,’ returned Mr. Finch, ‘be
‘not impatient, I dare believe she will not
‘take flight; you were certainly designed
‘by nature for each other; for, I do assure
‘you, she is of a most valuable disposition.
‘Tell me, young gentleman, are you wil-
‘ling to reward the noble part I have sus-
‘tained in this drama, by permitting me
‘the honour of conferring the child of my
‘much esteemed friend upon you?’ ‘I
‘know no one,’ replied sir William, ‘from
‘whose hands I would more gladly receive
‘her; and wish you could perform the
‘same grateful office for my friend, and
‘make him happy with miss Shelburne.’

‘You are a graceless youth,’ returned
Mr. Finch, ‘would you destroy your aunt
‘at

‘at once? Think you that your marriage
‘with the stroller’s sister, will not wound
‘her deep enough? She would never, I
‘am certain, survive, the complicated
‘blow.’ ‘I have,’ said sir William, ‘this
‘day two months, to that grand anniver-
‘sary of my birth, which will intitle me to
‘the management of my fortune, and my
‘neighbours to a revelling bout. If I can
‘prevail upon miss Stevens, to bestow her
‘hand upon me at that period, the glad-
‘ness of my own heart, shall be communi-
‘cated to thousands.’ ‘Never doubt it,
‘sir,’ said Mr. Finch, ‘you have so many
‘advocates to plead your cause, that suc-
‘cess must be yours.’ ‘I hope you will
‘not exclude my boy Charles and Mrs. Ste-
‘vens, from a participation of the general
‘joy? and to my certain knowledge, my
‘brother Finch would gladly make one at
‘such a festival.’ ‘There shall not one
‘of them be neglected,’ returned the ba-
ronet.

Mrs.

Mrs. Finch and miss Stevens, making their appearance, gave a turn to the conversation. The baronet became silent, Mr. Finch laughed aloud, the ladies were surprised, and looked, with curious meaning on the officer.

‘Why truly,’ said that gentleman, ‘the baronet has been consulting about fixing his wedding day, and appointing the particular regulation of it. Mrs. Stevens, our Charles, and my gouty brother, are to be invited; yet no sooner did the blooming bride elect, appear, than silence sealed the lips of my loquacious companion.’ Mrs. Finch had too much good nature and delicacy, to enjoy the confusion of the lovely pair. ‘I really am angry with you, Mr. Finch,’ said she, ‘for your abrupt, ill-timed railery. But defeat his purpose, sir William, disappoint him, for once, of a pleasure he does not deserve, at my request, by disregarding what he says; nor do you my Fanny, be in the least disconcerted.’

In

In order to relieve the lovers, this lady rang the bell for the tea-kettle, and hurried the breakfast. Miss Stevens's heart underwent a most uncommon agitation; from surprise and uncertainty, she longed for, yet dreaded, an explanation of Mr. Finch's behaviour; nor did the baronet enjoy much more composure. Mr. Finch, in obedience to his lady's requesting eyes, withdrew, an example she soon followed herself, and left the baronet at liberty, to explain her husband's behaviour.

Miss Stevens made an effort to retire, but was gently opposed by sir William. 'Pardon me, madam,' said he, 'the disorder I have occasioned you, by the honest bluntness of our common friend. You had, indeed, been long the subject of our conversation. I have my mother's consent to solicit your hand and heart, will not miss Stevens make her friends happy, by the acceptance of one, who is favoured with, and encouraged by, their general approbation?'

'I, sir.'

‘I, sir, have no will of my own,’ replied miss Stevens. ‘You must, you must,’ interrupted the baronet, ‘con- descend to be more than passive in an affair of so nice and delicate a nature. Your compliance with my humble solici- tations, must be voluntary, flowing from some happy sympathy you feel. You must pronounce my felicity with your own lovely lips; the voice of another will not satisfy. There is no impropriety in granting this request, for if miss Ste- vens can receive me for her companion and friend, and confirm that reception by the most solemn of engagements, in the presence of a full congregation, surely she may reconcile a whisper in my fa- vour alone, and unobserved, as we are at present, with her strictest notions of decorum.’ ‘I sir, am sensible of your merit,’ returned miss Stevens, ‘and ap- prove it with my whole heart.’ ‘Say then, my beloved girl,’ replied the baro- net, ‘you consent to my happiness; and that the day, on which I shall attain the age of maturity, shall give me a claim to
your

‘your best affections.’ ‘Ah, sir,’ said the lovely maid, ‘do not attempt to precipitate me—is the period you mention an early one?’ ‘No, no, madam, it is at the distance of two complete months, before which time, you shall have the pleasure of your good mother’s company, to strengthen and support your resolution; suffer me then to look forward to that period, as a happy one indeed.’ ‘The obligations you have conferred upon my dear brother, had, long before I beheld you, sir,’ said miss Stevens, ‘engaged my highest gratitude and esteem; wonder not then at the easy conquest you have gained, the generous friendship, the benignity and benevolence with which your heart is replete, dispel my fears, and plead your cause with irresistible eloquence.’

The baronet spent several agreeable hours with his mistress, and then returned to the hall, and imparted his success, to his assembled friends, who congratulated him on his approaching happiness. Lady
Brightley

Brightley was well pleased at the chosen day, and advised Mr. Stevens to apply to miss Shelburne's father, for his consent, to wed his daughter at the same happy juncture.

While things were in this situation, Mrs. Slaughter's evil genius prompted her once more to attempt the destruction of Mr. Stevens's hopes, of marrying her niece. The voice of fame had conveyed to her infidel ears, the incredible news of Mr. Stevens's change of fortune, which report she was resolved to disbelieve. She valued herself upon her precision, and was heard to declare, that if lady Brightley chose to exalt a beggar, from a gross imposition of a grandfather's noble provision for her, who himself was never worth a groat, she would take care to prevent Mr. Slaughter's family being taken in. This declaration, did not, however, reach the knowledge of lady Brightley and her friends, for some time. Mr. Stevens addressed the father of his beloved, in the following terms.

‘SIR,

‘SIR;

‘**N**Otwithstanding the unfavourable
‘light in which I was once repre-
‘sented to you, I hope I may, without
‘offence, apply to you at this time (the
‘death of my grandfather having intitled me
‘to three thousand pounds per annum) for
‘your consent to pay my addressee to your
‘amiable daughter. In return for which
‘favour, I will settle upon her, one third
‘of my fortune, without requiring a shil-
‘ling at your hands, either now, or here-
‘after, but as I may merit your favour.
‘My attorney shall wait upon you with
‘my rent-roll, if you require it, as I would
‘not leave a shadow of doubt in your
‘mind, concerning the reality of what I
‘profess. Lady Brightley does me the
‘honor to enclose this in a letter of her
‘own. May you, sir, prove as propitious
‘to my wishes, as the contents of her lady-
‘ship’s letter is favourable to me.

‘I am, sir, &c.’

Lady

Lady Brightley's address ran thus.

'SIR,

'FROM a principle of gratitude, I inter-
'rest myself so far in the happiness of
'the young gentleman who now applies to
'you for permission to address miss Shel-
'burne, that I take the liberty of accom-
'panying his letter with a recommendatory
'one from me. He has, for some years,
'been the companion of my son, in which
'capacity he approved himself worthy of
'the highest approbation. His family is
'genteel, his education has been liberal,
'and his fortune is now very considerable.
'By the severity of his grandfather, he was
'once reduced to narrow circumstances, in
'which condition, his greatness of mind,
'and integrity, shone with continued lustre.
'My son, and his sister, are to be united
'on the seventeenth day of September next.
'If my example can have any weight, my
'opinion, the smallest consideration, or
'my importunity persuade, bestow your
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worthy

‘worthy daughter upon honest Stevens;
 ‘Their dispositions are calculated for hap-
 ‘piness in union with each other; but if
 ‘denied that felicity, you may, perhaps,
 ‘hereafter lament your inattention to my
 ‘advice, and your disregard of confirmed
 ‘and well-attested merit.

‘I am, sir, &c.

The heart of Mr. Stevens was afflicted with many forboding unfavourable pangs, and when the post arrived with a letter for lady Brightley, he was seized with an universal tremor. On her ladyship’s opening it, she was astonished to find these words,

‘MADAM,

‘**I** Believe you are a very well-meaning,
 ‘but if you will give yourself the trou-
 ‘ble to read the enclosed, you will find
 ‘yourself a mistaken, woman. The fel-
 ‘low you would recommend to me, must
 ‘be master of a deep designing wicked
 ‘heart, as well as an extensive invention;

‘or

‘ or he could never have trumped up such
‘ a vile and impudent falsehood. A likely
‘ story, indeed, that a man possessed of
‘ three thousand pounds a year, would ex-
‘ pose an innocent grand-child to the ne-
‘ cessity of sitting under a hedge, to beg
‘ charity of every passenger! I wish my
‘ girl had never gone into the country: I
‘ love her, and therefore do’nt care to
‘ set her a whining, but I must say, that
‘ the sooner she can wean her affection so
‘ far, from a little dirty village, as to be
‘ willing to return to her father’s, the
‘ sooner will she restore him that satisfac-
‘ tion of heart, she has so long deprived
‘ him of, by her obstinacy and illness. I
‘ wish she would learn to be dutiful to her
‘ relations, before she thinks of becoming
‘ a wife.

‘ I am, madam, &c.’

Before lady Brightley would permit her audience to comment upon this boarish epistle, she read the inclosed.

DEAR SIR,

I Cannot answer it to the character of
a sister and friend, to omit putting
you upon your guard, against a vile im-
position which is now contriving, to catch
your consent for a beggar's becoming
your son-in-law. Lady Brightley, I un-
derstand, is determined to espouse his
cause. Poor woman, she is turned with
every blast by her unworthy son; he has
already flown in my face, notwithstanding
the days and nights I have watched over
him, with a more than maternal care.
Justice obliges me to give him up. This
villain, Stevens, has so wrought upon
him, that he is ripe for every deceitful
undertaking he pleases to propose. Your
daughter has long been the destined prey
of this unworthy, low-born being, and,
I am sorry to add, has met with but too
much encouragement from her. My ne-
phew has, likewise, had a sight of his
sister, an artful young hussy, and has
taken it into his wise head to like her so
well,

‘well, that no less will satisfy him, but
‘making lady Brightley of her. Now my
‘poor easy sister, allured by the flattering
‘report these boys have concerted to
‘spread, merely to answer their private
‘purpose, has given her consent (I have
‘scarce patience to write it) but she has
‘actually given her consent, to accept this
‘inveigling, mean creature, for her daugh-
‘ter-in-law. As my name is no longer
‘Brightley, I can better brook this prepos-
‘terous match, than Lucy’s with the inso-
‘lent fellow. I shall dispose my fortune,
‘you may be certain, in my niece’s fa-
‘vour, if she does not obstruct my good
‘intentions, by throwing herself away upon
‘a vagabond. I hope you will not dis-
‘regard this seasonable caution, from your,
‘&c.

‘ANN SLAUGHTER.’

Disappointment and dismay sat upon the brow of the unhappy Mr. Stevens, but lady Brightley treated Mr. Shelburne’s letter as a light concern. ‘It must be your
‘immediate business,’ said she, ‘to con-

vince him of the reality of your fortune,
for which purpose I will send him a letter
of invitation to Brightley.' So saying,
she wrote as follows.

SIR,

I HAVE every ungenteel part of your
letter, and will only take notice of its
most material contents. You inveigh,
with great virulence, against a young
man, whom the pen of prejudice alone
has represented to you, in an unfavour-
able light; give me leave, then, once
more to assure you, that he is not the
creature a relation of mine would induce
you to believe. Why then will you suffer
yourself to be the dupe of a woman's
malice? Nay, more, to become the tool
of her resentment, and sacrifice the hap-
piness and advantage of your beloved
child, to malicious tales, and groundless
fables? The distance from London to
Brightley is not so great, but a journey
hither, you will find, on reflection, an
eligible undertaking, to disabuse yourself.

My

‘My house shall be at your service, com-
 ‘mand my chariot to conduct you hither,
 ‘bring an able council with you to examine
 ‘Stevens’s title to the fortune he men-
 ‘tions, and if I have deceived you, your
 ‘daughter shall return home with you; if
 ‘you should find it otherwise, you will cer-
 ‘tainly act like a reasonable creature, and
 ‘consent to your daughter’s becoming the
 ‘wife of a rich and worthy man.

I am, &c.

Miss Shelburne said she was much mis-
 taken, if that letter had not the desired
 effect, but professed herself much concerne
 ed at the trouble she had brought upon her
 ladyship. ‘Mention it not, my good
 ‘girl,’ returned this worthy woman, ‘I
 ‘shall receive ample compensation, if I am
 ‘but so happy as to accomplish your union.
 ‘It is a common act of justice to detect the
 ‘base designs of the wicked, and vindicate
 ‘the innocent. Mr. Stevens has incurred
 ‘this fiery persecution, merely on my son’s
 ‘and my account; therefore he has a right

‘to command our best services. We will
‘patiently wait the result of this last appli-
‘cation, but I forbid,’ continued her lady-
ship, smiling, and looking on Mr. Ste-
vens,’ ‘all clouded brows and biting of
‘nails.’

The baronet and miss Stevens, enjoyed halcyon days, they had neither storm nor tempest to contend with, but an uninterrupted sunshine spread itself around them: Lady Brightley had all her jewels new set for a present to the bride, and made an excursion, accompanied by her son and Mr. Stevens, on horseback, with miss Shelburne and miss Fortescue in her coach, to conduct the old lady, her intended daughter’s mother, to Brightley. She had not yet quitted her peaceful cottage, which they found conformable to Mr. Slaughter’s description, rural, romantic, and beautiful. Its situation was on the declivity of a hill, the brow and descent of which was adorned with various flowery shrubs, sweetly interspersed, the fragrance where-
of

of perfumed the ambient air. At the bottom of this parnassus was a grove, where the loves and graces might have delighted to wanton. A little rivulet, sweeping with a serpentine gracefulness, contributed not a little to heighten the beauty, and refresh, by its frequent overflowing, the surrounding verdant meads. Six lambkins gambolled on the lawn, and cropped the grass and frolicked at their will. At a small distance was a rookery; the solemn stillness, the lofty pines, and melancholy caw of their black inhabitants, pleased miss Fortescue extremely, and, for the first time, extorted from her expressions of approbation. That I may not disgust the polite reader, I will not dwell longer on this description, only beg leave to mention, to prevent my incurring the imputation of a fabulist, that the hill, the lawn, the rookery, and rivulet, were all in miniature, and did not contain many roods of land.

Mrs. Stevens, though quite unprepared for this visit, was the picture of neatness.

Assisted by one of her maids, she was disposing of a collection of fine flowers, in a brace of China cornucopia's, the roses dropped from her hands, at the sight of her beloved child, and the tear of joy bedewed her venerable cheek. 'Alas,' said she, 'I was so faithless as to despair of ever again beholding the face of my Frank, but blessings have been even multiplied upon my head, in these my declining days, and the restoration of my son is one of the most valuable.'

Mr. Stevens then presented his mother to lady Brightley : 'Pardon me, madam,' said Mrs. Stevens, 'for yielding to the transports of nature, unmindful of your presence, and the gratitude and respect I owe you. To you, I am indebted for the pleasure that now warms my heart, for had you not sheltered and cherished that plant of my affection, the killing frost of poverty had, e're now, blasted him for ever.'

'If.'

‘ If,’ answered lady Brightley, ‘ there
‘ was any merit in affording an assylum to
‘ a worthy youth, qualified by nature and
‘ education to shine in a different sphere, to
‘ my son, madam, not to me, must it be
‘ imputed; my caution was superior to my
‘ generosity, and prompted me to endea-
‘ vour to persuade sir William to re-
‘ nounce his attachment to a stranger,
‘ merely for his being such. He will now
‘ be repaid ten fold for his kindness to
‘ the brother, by having the sister bestow-
‘ ed upon him, for a constant friend and
‘ companion.’

‘ Forgive me, miss Shelburne,’ said Mr.
Stevens, ‘ if I bring my dear mother ac-
‘ quainted with my benefactor, previous to
‘ my introduction of you. To him I owe
‘ the prosperity of my days, to him the
‘ unspeakable satisfaction of conversing
‘ with you, and to his mother (if I do ob-
‘ tain that inestimable blessing,’ continued
he sighing) ‘ the confirmation of my earthly
‘ felicity, as your hand will be yielded, not

“to mine, but her intreaty. This, my
“venerable parent,” said the grateful Ste-
vens, “is that noble youth who raised me
“from the utmost despondency and wretch-
“edness, to be the friend of his heart, and
“companion of his days; by his bounty
“have I been able to banish distress from
“your little habitation, and preserve your
“heart from sinking under the depressions
“of want and misery.”

The old lady gazed upon the baronet, with
glistening eyes, and said; “You are, you will
“be my son! My prayers and blessing will
“consequently be your due, and I have no-
“thing left to offer. Your reward is yet in
“store, and an abundant happiness will a-
“wait you, for protecting the fatherless, and
“causing the heart of the widow to sing
“with joy.” Then looking wistfully on the
“two young ladies, “Frank,” said she, “which
“is my daughter elect?” (miss Shelburne
blushing, she continued) “I read it, madam,
“in your countenance; may my son never
“forfeit, by any unworthy action, the
“good

‘good opinion you favour him with, but
‘well consider the duties of tenderness and
‘affection incumbent upon his character.’

‘This,’ said Mr. Stevens, taking miss Fortescue’s hand, ‘is a little friend we greatly
‘esteem. Fanny could not be of the party,
‘because a place in the coach was reserved
‘for you.’ ‘For me, child,’ repeated
Mrs. Stevens, ‘what do you mean? ‘Why
‘madam,’ returned lady Brightley, ‘sure-
‘ly you did not imagine, that your pre-
‘sence would not be solicited on the ap-
‘proaching happy occasion? We must
‘have no possible wish that day ungrati-
‘fied, and I leave you to judge, if that
‘could be the case, if you was to deny us
‘the pleasure of your company.’

‘I, madam,’ said Mrs. Stevens, ‘am
‘far advanced in years, and labour under
‘many insuperable infirmities. I am inca-
‘pable of raising the joy of my friends,
‘and should, but too probably, occasion
‘an allay of it. I believe I must be ex-
‘cused.’

'excused.' 'We will admit of no excuse,' said lady Brightley, 'you must return with us, our hearts are set upon it.'

The good old lady made no farther opposition to the will of her friends, but suffered herself to be conveyed to Brightley, to the great satisfaction of her daughter, and Mr. and Mrs. Finch.

Lady Brightley wrote to Mr. Fortescue, and pressed him so earnestly to consent to miss Caroline's continuance with her, 'till after her son's wedding, that he could not, without being guilty of an extreme breach of good manners, avoid consenting to it.'

Young Mr. Finch had many reasons for remaining in his servile capacity, with the counsellor; he was unwilling to cause any suspicion, by too early withdrawing himself, and apprehended miss Fortescue would stand in need of his further assistance. He overheard a conversation, full of evil, between the counsellor and Mrs. Swinton, and

and trembled for the consequence. When, therefore, he received a letter of invitation to attend the baronet's nuptials, he determined to delay his quitting town, until two days before the solemnization of them; and, if his master would permit him, continue amongst his friends for a fortnight. Mrs. Rebecca preferred this petition, and was successful. Poor miss Caroline was concerned at his delay, "*and thought his chariot long in coming;*" little suspecting the violence her lover did his inclination, in compelling himself to act the friend, and sacrificing the pleasure of her company, to the more important business of preserving her from absolute misery and destruction.

Mr. Shelburne, was piqued, in the manner lady Brightley wished, by her insinuation of his being the tool of a woman's resentment. Three thousand a year, was a fortune adequate to the utmost of his ambition, and too much to be trifled with; he, therefore, judged it incumbent upon him, to search into the fact, and discover which

which was, in reality, the deceived, which the malicious party. Pursuant to this intention, he consulted a man of eminence, who, for a handsome fee, consented to accompany him into Gloucestershire, and examine the rent-roll and title of Mr. Stevens's estate. Previous to this step, a shilling was paid at the Commons, to intitle the learned pleader to peruse the old gentleman's will; which corroborating all that lady Brightley and the young man had advanced, Mr. Shelburne began to wish he had not played the fool indeed, and bestowed many hearty curses upon the meddling, troublesome, captious Mrs. Slaughter. As he could not be spared from his business (Mr. Peat being not returned from Cornwall) longer than a week, he acquainted lady Brightley with his resolution, in the following manner:

‘MADAM,

‘**P**RESUMING upon the goodness of
 ‘your disposition, I do hope you will
 ‘pardon me my late infidelity and unpoliteness.

‘ nefs. I begin to apprehend I have been
‘ grossly imposed upon, I need not men-
‘ tion by whom, but every mistake shall
‘ be rectified. The gentleman cannot
‘ blame a father for being anxious about
‘ the disposition of his only child; if he
‘ loves, and knows her worth, he will ex-
‘ cuse all that is past. I will come down,
‘ and bring a friend with me, on the fif-
‘ teenth of September, and, if I find every
‘ thing as it should be, he shall have my
‘ girl from my own hand, and my blessing
‘ into the bargain. But I shall not bear the
‘ sight of that bad woman, who has, hither-
‘ to, thrown dust into my eyes, and made
‘ me blind to my child’s advantage and
‘ happiness; faithless, with respect to the
‘ young gentleman’s merit, and deaf to
‘ the sensible remonstrances, and kind per-
‘ suasions, of your ladyship.

‘ I am, with love to Lucy, &c.’

The face of things were now most agree-
ably changed, and Mr. Stevens enabled to
look forward with joyful hope, as well as
his

his friend. Miss Shelburne started many objections, now the doubts, with respect to her father, were removed, concerning the unprepared state she should be in for so early a day. Her father requiring ocular demonstration, before he gave a positive sanction, would render it, she said, utterly impossible for her to provide the smallest article. Lady Brightley declared it as her opinion, that the article of cloaths was of too light consideration to be attended to, and that she might, with equal propriety, be accommodated, after the ceremony, as before. The elder Mr. Finch accepted her ladyship's invitation with pleasure, as he said, it would be gaining some hours from the gout; for he doubted not, but the satisfaction he should enjoy on such a happy occasion, would be superior to his pain. He was conducted to the village by his brother, a whole month preceding this great event; and, notwithstanding all his infirmities, contributed greatly to enhance the good-humour and mirth of his friends. 'It is,' said he, looking first upon the young ladies,

dies,

dies, then upon his brother, 'a very lucky
'circumstance, that I did not visit you be-
'fore these girls had disposed of their
'hearts; for I should have been very apt
'to have play'd lord Chalkstone, by gal-
'lanting them a little, the consequence of
'which would have been bloodshed and
'confusion amongst my rivals.' 'There
'is still one heart unengaged,' replied the
old officer, 'but you, looking at his bro-
ther, 'ought not to be well received by its
'possessor, for opposing her becoming your
'neighbour, at a certain season.' An in-
voluntary sigh escaped miss Fortescue at
this instant, and a tender emotion informed
her, that Mr. Finch was greatly deceived.

Mr. Shelburne, at length, arrived at
Brightley, when he was very genteely receiv-
ed by the whole company. His friend soon
assured him Mr. Stevens was no impostor,
and drew the instrument, by which miss
Lucy was intitled to the jointure Mr. Ste-
vens had offered. The old man was then
as fond and proud of his son, as ever he
had

had been violent against him; and could not be prevailed on so far to subdue his resentment, as to make Mrs. Slaughter a visit, but declared, if she was at the wedding, he should not enjoy the least satisfaction. On the morrow of Mr. Shelburne's arrival, an invitation was sent to the curate and his lady, to attend the nuptial ceremony (the former, indeed, was to perform it) Mrs. Slaughter returned a very rough message, signifying, that she would not act so inconsistently with the dignity of her character, as to mix with company she despised. No one person was mortified at her ungenteel declaration, nor regretted her absence. Amongst this general assembly of glad countenances, and glad hearts, was poor miss Fortescue a solitary Eve, hardly able to sustain the difficult task, of appearing, in the *midst of sorrow*, gay. The evening approached, without the captain's making his appearance. Various were her perturbations, false alarms, and pleasing expectations. Each trampling horse, or ringing at the gate, occasioned her gentle heart

Heart to flutter. Robbers, accidents terrible, and bugbears innumerable, haunted her disturbed imagination. Her lips were sealed by dire apprehension, her ears undelighted with the conversation of her friends. In this disagreeable situation she continued for three long hours, when the arrival of the blooming hero dispelled her every fear. The change in her behaviour was too visible to pass unobserved, vivacity informed her features, and the late fair, lifeless statue, prattled in pleasing strains.

The next morning was ushered in with the utmost demonstrations of joy. The bells (for there were a couple) were tinkled for many successive hours; the lads and lasses pursued their rural sports upon the village green; open house was kept at the hall; joy and plenty seemed to have commenced their reign. The first ceremony performed by the reverend Mr. Slaughter, united the happy baronet and amiable miss Stevens, in one common lot, an office that procured him a most genteel gratuity. Mr. Finch bestowed
this

this valuable gift upon his young friend, who received it with all due gratitude and graceful humility. This knot was no sooner tied, than Mr. Stevens, and the lovely miss Shelburne, advanced, to follow so good an example. The literal father with pleasure beheld (and was aiding and assisting in) a disposition of his child, which some months before had been considered by him as unworthy of her, and most contemptible; so much had three thousand a year awakened him. The day was concluded with every demonstration of mirth, and without one of those accidents so incident to a rejoicing multitude.

END OF BOOK V.

BOOK VI.

***** CAPTAIN Finch seemed now
 ***** to breathe a new air, indeed;
 ***** the absence he had endured
 ***** having infinitely endeared his
 beloved Caroline. He reflected upon the
 service he had done her, as the noblest ac-
 tion of his life, and promised himself still
 to persevere with his former generosity:
 'Nothing but the last extremity,' said he,
 'shall extort the secret from me, that it is
 'I to whom this lovely maid is indebted for
 'her present ease and tranquility. I would
 'recommend myself to her affection on
 'friendship's basis, gratitude is too com-
 'pulsive an attraction for an ingenuous
 'mind, and may, sometimes, be mistaken,
 ' by

‘ by the inexperienced and undistinguish-
‘ ing, for love itself, it being a passion, in
‘ some sort, congenial. It is a softer incli-
‘ nation with which I would wish to inspire
‘ the gentle breast of miss Fortescue ; it is
‘ esteem, friendship, tenderness and affec-
‘ tion, strongly and intimately blended,
‘ that constitute true love. A great soul
‘ may be thankful to the author of its satisf-
‘ faction, the enlarger of its fortune, or
‘ preserver or restorer of its liberty, though
‘ unable to unite that tender principle re-
‘ quisite to love, and which is, indeed, its
‘ essence.’

The fourteen days limited for Mr. Finch's absence from his master, too soon elapsed, blessed, as he was, with the company and approbation of his Caroline. Disimulation is a practice unknown to native simplicity, and disguises alone are necessary to cover guilt. Miss Fortescue's innocence condemned their aid, what *she thought in her heart, might be read in her eyes*, and her actions, spontaneously, flowed from the dictates of
of

of honest nature; consequently, her favourable consideration of Mr. Finch could not be long a secret, tho' unconfessed by her lips. The speaking silence her eyes possessed revealed it all. The captain's return, and retention of his master's and favourite housekeeper's good liking, were of too much consequence to be disregarded by him. He departed, therefore, from Brightley, supported only by the reflections of well-doing, and well-meriting. He knew his Caroline must soon follow him, but did not consider, that he, alone, should derive felicity from that event, as she imagined she had parted with him for a long, long season, on his quitting Brightley. He found, on his resuming his humble station, that mischief was gathering thick; every look was threatening, every word ambiguous. He was too much alarmed, not to think it necessary to put miss Fortescue on her guard, by intimating her danger; he, therefore, wrote as follows:

VOL. II.

L

MADAM;

MADAM,

AS you will, shortly, be summoned
to return to a dangerous situation,
it may not be improper to inform you,
that your invisible friend still exists, and
is as much devoted to your service as ever.
Great designs are planning, nay, I fear,
they are cruel ones. I cannot, at this
juncture, ascertain the nature of them,
but, if you will examine the wonted re-
pository on your return, you shall find a
more explicit account, as the mischief
will then be riper, and, perhaps, greater
discoveries made. This caution I must,
however, give you, not to be, in reality,
intimidated by any threats; if they should
propose a journey to you, comply with
seeming, not heart-felt, reluctance, for,
be assured, you shall be delivered; I will
never leave nor forsake you, until you are
arrived at a place of rest and safety. I have
that already in my power, that shall con-
found all their devices, therefore, keep
up your spirits, and rely entirely upon
your most sincere friend.

This

This letter was canvassed by the friendly society, and caused an equal degree of wonder, terror, and satisfaction. Who this invisible correspondent could be, occasioned much speculation and debate. The mention of cruel designs that were hatching against the young lady's peace, terrified and concerned them; but the repeated assurances of the continued attachment and best assistance of her unknown friend, gave them great consolation. The gentlemen were of opinion, it was some lover, that thus interested himself in miss Caroline's happiness; but were puzzled, on that young lady's declaring, that she never saw any more than one male visitant at her father's, and he was her appointed husband; and that she was not permitted to go any where but to church, accompanied by her father's housekeeper. After various conjectures, and many humorous reflections, they were obliged to leave the matter as they found it, acknowledging it to be inexplicable.

Mr. Fortescue had kept an exact account, in his memory, of the baronet's wedding-day; and no sooner was one succeeding week expired, than he wrote a polite, hypocritical letter to lady Brightley, begging the restoration of his daughter, and professing the utmost sense of great obligation for her ladyship's friendly care of her. 'My dear madam,' said miss Caroline, the tears flowing plentifully, 'how
'unable am I to speak my gratitude for
'the extreme kindness and indulgence I
'have received from you! I have now
'troubled you to little purpose, as I have
'been delivered from one evil only to
'plunge into a greater! O my mother,' cried she, 'how would your heart have
'been wounded, had you lived to see these
'days!' 'I hope,' said lady Brightley, 'things are not so bad as you apprehend.
'Your friend will assist you in every future
'exigence, and counter-work all their bad
'designs. Let it be your part to mean
'well, and trust the result to providence.
'Depend upon it, my good girl, we shall
'meet

‘meet again, free from these alarms, and
‘afflicting separations, if you do but pre-
‘serve your spirits undepressed.’

It was judged proper, by the friendly circle, that miss Fortescue should seem to pay a willing obedience to her father's commands, nor betray the smallest suspicion of any farther violence or persecution, but appear to rely, with perfect confidence, on his declaration of desisting from his former intentions,

The good woman, who conducted this lovely girl to Brightley, was deputed to reconduct her to London. The horrid morn of cruel separation arrived, attended with gloom and sadness; the happiness of the several principal inhabitants of the village was allayed, by their concern for the fate of this amiable innocent. Notwithstanding this young lady was accommodated with the same carriage, horses, and companion, as in her journey to Gloucestershire, her return, in appearance, was swift as air,

in comparison of her flight from town; her apprehension having rendered the latter tedious to her frightened imagination, and attended with a thousand retarding circumstances. Little did she imagine that, in less than four and twenty hours, she should be lodged under the same roof with her admired hero.

On the chariot's reaching the door of her father's house, she was seized with a kind of ague-fit. The sound of the stopping carriage no sooner saluted the captain's ears, than he flew to open the door, and, spite of his resolution, and the preparing intelligence of his master, of miss Caroline's being that day expected, his confusion and joy were too powerful for him. Weak, and insufficient, were all the brooms and brushes of Mrs. Rebecca, most perversely crossed and re-crossed in the passage, to obstruct his impatience to behold the object of his tenderest regard; but wiser had he been, had he proceeded with a smaller degree of love, and a larger degree of caution;

caution; for, making a false step, as he was surmounting, or, rather, disengaging himself from, the barriers above-mentioned, he was thrown with such violence against the unopened door, as to occasion a vast effusion of blood. His streaming nostrils soon rendered him a deplorable spectacle, and such he presented himself to miss and her companion. But as human ills are often productive of some unseen good, so it happened in the present case; for the captain's wig, in which consisted all his disguise, had slipped his unguarded head, and would, but for the besmeared condition he was in, have infallibly betrayed him.

The good-nature of miss Caroline was exceedingly shocked by the poor lad's disaster, brought upon him by his diligence in obliging her, little imagining, the compassionate expressions she let drop, sufficiently compensated the captain's pangs. Unwarily, our young officer washed his face in the presence of Mrs. Reed, lady Brightley's woman, who instantly cry'd

L 4

out,

out, ' Good Heavens, whom do I see ?
' capt'.... The hero, clapping his hand most judiciously upon the good woman's mouth, prevented her adding more, or all his schemes had been defeated, and his good purposes, with respect to miss Fortescue, rendered abortive. Mrs. Rebecca was most fortunately busied, at this critical moment, in concerns of a domestic nature ; miss Caroline, attracted by a natural curiosity, was retired into a little parlour, to search for a letter of information, and the counsellor was from home ; so that Mr. Finch had just time to say, ' I intreat, Mrs. Reed, ' you will not discover me to any one in ' this family, not even to miss Fortescue ; ' it is for her service, though without her ' knowledge, that I have assumed this disguise : your lady will thank you for preserving this secret, and I will tell you all ' at a convenient season.' Mrs. Reed promised to act as desired, and the captain made an honourable and timely retreat, and regained his disguise without farther danger or difficulty. The provident lawyer

yer had contrived to be absent upon his daughter's arrival, to avoid the expence of either treating, or seeing, lady Brightley's servants, insomuch that the waiting gentlewoman must have returned to the inn unrefreshed, had not Frank produced a shilling, and generously treated both Rebecca and her.

Poor miss Caroline was greatly mortified at this circumstance; not a farthing did she possess upon earth, and had a spirit superior to mean actions. Frank, however, supplied every deficiency, by accommodating his brother lacqueys with a cordial a-piece, and a reward, in miss Fortescue's name, which she was entirely unacquainted with. Lady Brightley, from a knowledge of the counsellor's sordid disposition, had ordered Mrs. Reed not to continue at his house for the night they were to stay in town, even on the most pressing invitation, as they feared, however well he might preserve appearances, during their presence, miss Caroline would suffer for it after their

departure. How unnecessary this caution, I submit to the reader's judgment, as the gentleman did not venture home until eleven o'clock at night, when he hoped to find (as he really did) the coast entirely clear.

Mrs. Reed possessed many good qualities; she had been genteely bred, and was a woman of general veracity, yet was she not proof against the communicative impulses of her heart. Captain Finch had enjoined her (and she had engaged to observe) the utmost secrecy, as his plot, he said, was not yet ripe for discovery. But as, she was well assured, the revealing what she knew would neither be a disservice, or disadvantage to him, she fairly discharged the weight this trust had imposed upon her mind, to the great emolument and diversion of the gentlemen and ladies at Brightley.

His uncle declared he honoured him for his enterprising spirit, and prompt invention,

tion, and would gladly lend a helping hand to his success. 'If,' continued he, 'Frank should be able to accomplish the great attempt of delivering this lady from her enchanted castle, she can do no less than reward him with her hand and heart; and, if the young dog should be so fortunate, I will surrender an estate of four hundred a year to him (which my death would infallibly intitle him to) to prevent the narrow soul'd lawyer's reflecting upon his daughter's choice, as well as save the young couple from the sin of wishing my death, and to enable the boy to prove his generosity, and proper contempt, of her paltry dross. Thus,' proceeded Mr. Finch, senior, 'would I compromise with the old curmudgeon, to avert every disagreeable consequence. Let him bestow his daughter upon Frank immediately, and retain her fortune until he kicks off the turf; it must come to our knight-errant at last, and is worth waiting for. I will, this moment, inform him of my design in his favour; perhaps he may be able, by his ingenuity,

L 6

genuity, to strike an advantage out of such an intelligence." No one attempting to oppose this resolution (too favourable to the young gentleman to meet with opposition from his friends) he soon compleated the following curious epistle:

DEAR FRANK,

THOU hast, by the intrepidity, and sprightliness of thy genius, revived thy uncle's heart, and put gout, rheumatism, and all attending aches and pains, to the rout. I always believed you born for some great purpose, and therefore put you upon *seeking reputation in the cannon's mouth*; and, notwithstanding thou hast stood many a bounce and whiz, both of pistol and gun, hast preserved every part about thee unwounded but thy heart. Thou hast (once more to quote my favourite Shakespear) found more peril in the eye of beauty, than twenty thousand of the enemy's swords. And, as *none but the Brave can deserve the Fair*, so I pronounce beauty, aye, even such a beauty

as

“as the amiable-miss Fortescue, (does not
“your heart dance now.?) shall be your re-
“ward.

“But, harkee, Frank, do not dishonour
“your profession by a breach of any one-
“capitulated article, but punctually per-
“form the engagement you make. Let
“the fair one march out of the garrison,
“with all her virgin honors, nor abuse the
“power, her surrender gives you over her.
“Have recourse to no mean subterfuges,
“nor take an ungenerous advantage. Lodge
“her in a place of safety, and let, whatever
“steps she may be disposed to take in your
“favour, be voluntary and spontaneous.
“As for old Gripus, I would not recom-
“mend him to any quarter, but from his
“connexion with the sweet Caroline. Ne-
“ver sow the seeds of disobedience in the
“heart of any man’s child, unless you
“would draw down vengeance on your
“own head. Let his avarice, his schemes,
“his cruelty, be absolved in your consider-
“ation, by this single remembrance, that
“he

‘he is father of that woman you would
‘obtain for your wife, nor once flatter
‘yourself, that an unnatural, or undutiful
‘child, will either fulfil her vows to you,
‘or shine in a maternal character. There’s
‘preachment for you my boy, and see that
‘your uncle preaches not in vain.

‘This is my advice, when you have got
‘the girl in your power, propose terms of
‘accommodation with the muck-worm, re-
‘duce him to reason by your disinterested
‘concessions, bid him keep his dirty dross,
‘till he can keep it no longer, and assure
‘him that four hundred a year (an estate I
‘will put you into possession of the day
‘you become a husband) and so lovely a
‘girl as Caroline Fortescue, will amply con-
‘tent you; and you ought to be hanged if
‘you do not in that respect, speak your
‘honest sentiments: mind that young
‘blade.

‘We long to have you amongst us, to
‘hear you relate your adventures. Oh,
‘this

“this undertaking, if successful (and if the
“devil does not owe you a grudge, you
“must be successful) will furnish us with
“many a pleasant winter’s tale. Go on
“my boy, let honor and perseverance be
“your motto, and you will eclipse the
“late love-sick baronet, and the whining
“Stevens. Fortune, that blind goddess,
“favoured their desires, but you will work
“out your happiness by the literal sweat of
“your brow. I could hug you for your
“bravery, and will not fail to prefer peti-
“tions in your behalf. We all love, esteem,
“and admire you.”

“I am, &c.”

Mr. Finch’s mortification at the treach-
ery of Mrs. Reed, was totally dispersed by
the generosity of his uncle. A subaltern’s
commission was inadequate to support
even himself; and such greatness of mind
did he possess, that he would have died,
rather than involve the woman he loved,
in the difficulties and inconveniences of
life. But four hundred pounds a year, in
such

such a village as Brightley, surrounded by such an invaluable set of friends, loving as he did, and equally beloved, was, to his imagination, the summit of human bliss. To be able to convince his Caroline, that her happiness was dearer to him than her fortune, to silence the avaritious, and consequently outrageous, cries of her disappointed father, by leaving him in the full possession, of what he preferred to every natural tie, or tender consideration, and prove to the world that he was not a beggar, though by no means suitable in circumstance with miss Fortescue, gave him the most heart-felt satisfaction he had ever enjoyed.

Miss Caroline, upon searching the wonted repository, found a very alarming account of her father's intention towards her, in the following words.

"I T grieves me, madam, to be obliged to increase those apprehensions, I would, at the hazard of my life, endeavour to diminish;

‘ diminish; but your father is come to a
‘ desperate, and, permit me to say, cruel
‘ resolution. The woman to whom he now
‘ pays his addresses, is, as the papist’s
‘ phrase it, a good catholick, and has per-
‘ suaded Mr. Fortescue, that, in order to
‘ punish your disobedience, in rejecting
‘ the husband he had chosen for you, you
‘ ought to be devoted to a cloister. A re-
‘ bellious daughter, she says, is a calamity
‘ no man in his senses would tolerate, and
‘ have it in his power, if not to reduce her
‘ to reason, with respect to his proposition,
‘ to deliver himself from her. She declares
‘ herself an enemy to violence, nor would
‘ she consent to her nephew’s being united
‘ to an unthinking, ungrateful girl, who
‘ must be compelled to make herself hap-
‘ py. Your fortune, my dear madam (para-
‘ don my advancement of this fact) your
‘ fortune will be as effectually secured to
‘ their possession and use, by this sacrifice
‘ of you, as by a matrimonial one, which
‘ is the incitement alone, of the schemes
‘ and plots that have been, and are preme-
‘ ditating.

dictating against you. To morrow, a journey to Paris will be proposed to you, as merely a journey of pleasure and improvement; Mrs. Swinton has many friends, she will tell you, to receive you; Mrs. Rebecca is to be your attendant, and has, already received her vile commission, for the execution of which she is to be well rewarded; you are to be conveyed immediately to a nunnery, well known to Mrs. Swinton; and your generous, humane, and honest conductress, is charged with an epistle of instruction for the lady abbess, with respect to the disposition of you. I beg miss Fortescue to be as little concerned as possible, at this information, nor unwillingly deceive the cruel deceiver; comply with their foreign proposal with seeming reluctance, and prepare yourself to meet on your landing at Calais, your rescuing friend, whose invisible service must then come to a period. The day of your departure will be that of your father's wedding; but I fear no evil consequence from that event;

your

‘ your friend will not serve you by halves;
‘ he has every one of the confederate parties
‘ in his power, and will make such terms
‘ for you, as shall be intirely consistent
‘ with your satisfaction and happiness.

‘ I am, &c.’

Miss Fortescue’s trembling hand, could scarce retain this fatal letter, the inhumanity of her father shocked her gentle nature, and she lamented her near connexion and affinity with a man, capable of such unnatural proceedings.

The next morning convinced her that she had not been misinformed, for the artful Mrs. Swinton breakfasted at her father’s, and, affecting to be particularly attached to miss Caroline, asked the lawyer at what school his daughter had been educated; and upon that gentleman’s frank acknowledgement of the little attention he had paid to the young lady in that respect, she exclaimed against him in a most violent manner. ‘ I protest,’ said she, ‘ Mr.

‘ Fort-

Fortescue, 'I little thought you capable of so gross a neglect. Surely you have adopted Mahometan principles, and conceive us women to have no souls. Your daughter, without a compliment (bowing with all the bewitching grace of artificial kindness) 'has an understanding that would banish this narrow error, from the heart of the most rigid Mussulman. It would certainly be impertinent in me to prescribe, or I could recommend a step that would perfectly atone for your past omissions.' 'Madam,' returned the counsellor, 'whatever you can propose, I am persuaded I must approve, as I am too well convinced of your discretion and judgment, to hesitate or debate.' 'Then,' returned Mrs. Swinton, 'I should think it highly requisite to send miss Caroline to a nunnery at Paris; I myself, was brought up in one, and, consequently, am enabled to judge of the great advantage of education they afford. Their method of instruction is not like our English schools, laborious, and distasteful.'

“tasteful to a young mind, but is so charmingly adapted to the fancy and inclination of youth, that the most difficult branches are attained with the greatest facility. I protest, miss, if it were my case, I would never cease soliciting my father, until I obtained his consent, to his situating me in one of those agreeable and delightful retirements.”

“Madam,” replied miss Caroline, with an hesitation occasioned by the tremor this conversation had thrown upon her spirits, “I am an incompetent judge of this matter; my father has a right to dispose of me as he pleases, I have engaged to comply, and shall not therefore prove refractory, to whatever he may determine for me.” This scheming pair cast an exulting glance at each other, and Mr. Fortescue, with the politeness (and indeed sincerity) of a courtier, submitted himself to the superior judgement of the lady, and, in less than half an hour, miss Caroline’s journey to France was concluded, the day of her departure fixed, her attendant

attendant and conductress appointed; and the nunnery chosen for her reception, was the very same as Mrs. Swinton had formerly been placed in.

These preliminaries adjusted, the few necessary preparations were instantly set about, and such diligence and industry, were used on the occasion, that, on the third ensuing day, the young lady and her grim duenna, departed; and being accommodated with a creature of Mrs. Swinton's, who spoke French, and was to be their interpreter, a light carriage, and able horses, they soon reached their destined inn at Dover, where they were detained some hours by the perverse winds. The canonical hour no sooner commenced, the very morning that conveyed miss Caroline from London, than the nuptials were solemnized, between the lawyer and Mrs. Swinton, who congratulated and re-congratulated each other, on their success.

During

During this ceremony, Mr. Frank took a French leave of them, and assuming the disguise of an old man, hastened after his beloved girl, and arrived at Dover in due season. He well knew the house in which his Caroline was to be lodged, and, consequently occupied the same, and engaged a passage in that very packet that was to transport her from her native country. They were all safely disembarked on the French dominions, and Mr. Finch being well acquainted with the inn-keeper at Calais, whose house, by his pre-appointment, they were to occupy, hastened on before, and easily effected his every purpose. The postillion of the chaise, hired by Mrs. Rebecca to carry them to Paris, on being administered a retaining fee, and promised a handsome gratuity, on compleating the captain's desire, engaged to follow his instructions with the utmost exactness. The interpreter, by the assistance of the landlord, was rendered incapable of attending them, by a fit of intemperance, and was to remain in the innkeeper's care, until the
return

return of the packet, when, by Mr. Finch's orders, he was to be re-conveyed to England.

The chaise driver undertook to perform the office of interpreter, which reconciled them to the misfortune of losing the one they had brought with them, and they pursued their journey, early the next morning, nothing doubting. The lad, as a specimen of his best services, or rather agreeable to the directions he had received, struck out of the great road to Paris, as ordered, and conveyed the ladies to a little convenient cabin, the host and hostess whereof, was intirely at his devotion. A defect in the carriage was his excuse for troubling the ladies to alight, where they had continued but a few moments, before the gallant captain, in the character already mentioned, sent in his compliments, and begged to be permitted to join company with his fair countrywomen. The prudent Mrs. Rebecca most sagaciously denied this request, at the same time throwing out many very intelligent

ligent insinuations, of the impertinent light the stranger's application appeared in, to her prudent judgment.

Miss Caroline's heart went pit a pat; she hoped her deliverer was at hand, but dreaded the consequence of her deliverance. To be in the power of a stranger in a foreign country, ignorant of its language, without one friend, or one shilling in her pocket, were, to her, miserable reflections. But the recollection of her father's unnatural treatment of her, and the end and purport of her journey, dispelled every softness and timidity from her heart, and roused her courage and grateful dependance on her promised preserver.

The pretended old gentleman's choler was raised, by the abrupt refusal of his request, and he loudly insisted upon satisfaction. He declared his designs were perfectly honourable, and his behaviour consistent with the rules of travelled civility; nor should any one restrain him from

beholding the face of that person, who had so greatly injured him, as to suspect him to be other than a gentleman, and a friend to the fair sex.

Perseverance, 'tis said, will surmount the greatest of difficulties; it was, indeed, availing to the disguised captain, and made a happy passage for him through a little battery of opposers, to the door of the ladies apartment, into which he entered without farther ceremony. On seeing Mrs. Rebecca, he affected to start with surprise, and challenged her for an acquaintance. She protested her eyes had never before beheld so rude a man; but he persisted in his claim, and begged she would give him leave to assist her recollection of him; to which end he repeated the several artifices of Mr. Fortescue, his wedding, and the design he was then upon, with respect to the young lady, and concluded with demanding the letter she had about her, for the lady abbess. This was no time for dissembling; the frightened, guilty wretch, imme-

immediately delivered her horrid commission. The captain then told her, that she might compose herself, and, as she hoped for pardon, for the vile part she had acted, to use her young lady with the utmost kindness, and wait his pleasure at that place, for if she attempted to escape from thence, he would instantly deliver her up to justice. He then addressed the trembling Caroline, and conjured her to be satisfied, that things would take an agreeable turn, and a few weeks restore her to her friends at Brightley; and retired without discovering himself, kissing the hand of his mistress, or once casting himself at her feet, contrary to the example of modern heroes.

Rebecca gave no other signs of repentance, than fullness and silence. The mention of Brightley had answered the desired purpose, and perfectly calmed the before troubled heart of the lovely miss Fortescue, and furnished her with many pleasing reflections. The captain, when

alone, broke open the letter intended for the abbess of the nunnery, and read as follows.

‘ MOST HONOURED LADY,

‘ **P**RESUMING you cannot have forgotten Sarah Clark, who received her education at your house, and who enjoyed a large share of your kind indulgence; I take the liberty of informing you, that the bearer of this letter is house-keeper to a particular friend of mine, and has been employed in the troublesome and difficult task, of delivering a worthy man from a disobedient and head-strong daughter, heiress to fifty thousand pounds. She has declared rebellion against her parent and guardians, by refusing to receive a husband her father had chosen for her, and eloping from his house. He, therefore, by my means, commits her to your care, and requests, that no discipline or exhortation may be wanting to bring her to her duty. But should she obstinately persist in her non-compliance
‘ with

‘ with his will, he is determined never to
‘ behold her more ; and hopes you will, in
‘ such a case, have so much consideration
‘ and christian regard for her precious soul,
‘ as to spare no pains to convert her to the
‘ true religion, and engage her, by her ac-
‘ ceptance of the veil, to atone her past
‘ transgressions. Was this action less me-
‘ ritorious, I should not have applied to
‘ you, whose indefatigable industry I can
‘ rely upon. In her year of probati-
‘ on, every preliminary, with respect to
‘ her fortune, shall be adjusted to your
‘ intire satisfaction ; for the certain per-
‘ formance whereof, I give you my honor
‘ for your dependance and security,

‘ And am, &c.’

‘ Infernal woman !’ cried the captain,
casting the letter upon the table, ‘ and
‘ abandoned, unnatural monster, (father I
‘ cannot call him) thus to renounce, to sa-
‘ crifice his child, in order to enjoy her
‘ fortune ! but I will blast their hopes, as
‘ I have defeated their designs, and a few

‘ days only, shall they rejoice in their ill-
 ‘ gotten possessions.’

He soon dispatched the following letter to Mr. Fortescue, and then waiting upon his Caroline, recompenced himself for all he had done, by conversing and supping with that amiable girl.

‘ S I R,

‘ **T**HERE is but one consideration
 ‘ that could restrain me from shew-
 ‘ ing you to the world in your true colours.
 ‘ How have you abused the talents com-
 ‘ mitted to your care? and employed your
 ‘ understanding and great abilities, merely
 ‘ ineffecting and perpetrating base schemes?
 ‘ Heaven, sir, blessed you with an amiable
 ‘ child, for a better purpose than betraying
 ‘ her innocence and peace. Mr. Stapleton
 ‘ appointed you the guardian of your
 ‘ daughter’s fortune, for a better end
 ‘ than endowing a nunnery with it; how
 ‘ can you then, thus act in opposition to
 ‘ all laws both human and divine? yet,
 ‘ yet

‘ yet you have a protection----the Caroline,
‘ you have so greatly injured, preserves
‘ you from the rod of justice, if you im-
‘ mediately comply with the following
‘ terms. She has long been beloved, with
‘ a generous and disinterested passion, by a
‘ young gentleman, much her inferior in
‘ fortune. He has not attempted to en-
‘ gage her clandestine acceptance of him,
‘ but has now preserved her from the de-
‘ struction you intended her. If her father
‘ will consent to be *his* father, and make
‘ the concessions in her favour voluntarily,
‘ which the law would oblige him to, the
‘ secret of his unnatural conduct shall re-
‘ main in his breast. He is now possessed
‘ of Mrs. Swinton’s letter to the lady ab-
‘ bess, and will, for miss Fortescue’s sake,
‘ prevent its appearing against you. Your
‘ speedy answer, if a propitious one, will
‘ procure the enlargement of your favourite,
‘ iniquitous handmaid, and determine your
‘ own fate. You cannot complain; in the
‘ snare that you laid for your child, are
‘ you yourself taken! Commit her, there-
‘ fore,

‘ fore, to the future care of one who is not
‘ blind to her great merit, and with whom
‘ her value is superior to the treasures of
‘ the east. He will reconduct her to Eng-
‘ land with honor and safety, nor discover
‘ himself to her, until he receives your
‘ sanction, to solicit her hand; the only
‘ action that can wipe away your guilt, and
‘ save you from shame.

‘ I am, &c.’

This letter had all the effect that could be expected on base and mean minds. Mrs. Fortescue was as eager to do justice to the young lady, as Mrs. Swinton had been to injure her, and an answer, to the last degree propitious, was returned to our young hero; which he no sooner received, than he put the ladies in a chaise, and attended them on horseback to Calais, where they continued that night, and the succeeding one were safely landed at Dover. A carriage was engaged by the noble captain, to convey his beloved miss Fortescue to Brightley, and he himself accompanied her
the

the first day's journey. Mrs. Rebecca had no conception of the route they were taking, until they arrived at the village, after four days travelling. Mr. Finch took leave of the young lady at the inn; and, wishing her safe to the place of her destination, put the following letter into her hands, the contents of which, he said, would inform her of all she could wish to know. She opened it the instant he left her, and read, to her great amazement, as follows :

‘MADAM,

‘**Y**OU have now proceeded twenty
‘miles on your way to Brightley,
‘where, you well know, there are two
‘houses open to receive you; it is your
‘own option that must direct you to pre-
‘fer the one or the other. I have now done
‘with prescribing. Prepare, miss Fortes-
‘cue, for a strange piece of intelligence;
‘and, oh, suffer your heart to be favour-
‘ably disposed! Your father's servant,
‘Frank, your invisible friend, the old man
‘that delivered you from a nunnery, and
‘the

‘ the person that now addrestes you, is the
‘ single Mr. Finch, who has long, long
‘ been attached to you. Your peace, your
‘ happiness, has been dearer to him than
‘ his own; and the regard he has for your
‘ reputation, let his actions speak. To pre-
‘ serve that unfullied, he has denied himself
‘ the satisfaction of conversing with you,
‘ and served you, without any other recom-
‘ pence, than the pleasure alone of serving
‘ you: Your father is intirely in his power,
‘ but he is incapable of using it; and, for
‘ your peace-sake, will prevent his being
‘ exposed. He has consented to his solicit-
‘ ing that consideration of him his heart
‘ has so long been ambitious of. You,
‘ madam, best know what you can do in
‘ his favour, and he is resolved to abide by
‘ your determination, be it whatsoever it
‘ may. His attachment to you is incapable
‘ of abatement; his affection for you unal-
‘ terable; and the sincere wish of his heart,
‘ your happiness and satisfaction. He will
‘ immediately rejoin his corps, and wait
‘ the result of your resolves, with how
‘ much

‘ much painful suspense, tender apprehension, and agitation of heart, you are no less incapable of conceiving, than he of describing, and must ever remain,

‘ your sincere admirer,

‘ FRANCIS FINCH.’

The gentle maid felt, on perusing this letter, the alternate successions of generous, compassionate, applauding, affectionate, and grateful sensations in her mind; and, as her lover had so greatly distinguished himself from the common race of lovers, she determined to deviate from the common behaviour of females, and acknowledge her gratitude and affection for this unexceptionable young man. A thousand incidents occurred to her imagination, as she pursued her journey, of his delicacy, and his tenderness for her; she wanted no companion to converse with; time flew as swiftly as the carriage, and she arrived at Brightley unfatigued in body, and pleased in mind.

The happy circle were prepared for her reception, by a letter from Mr. Finch, and they dismissed her attendant, with many tokens of displeasure and disgust. The good girl was ingenuous, acknowledged her obligations to the captain, and confessed he had, previously, inspired her with a tender approbation. She said, if he could think her heart and hand a sufficient recompence for all he had done and suffered, he might command them, and, during her whole life, she would bear his many kindnesses in remembrance. The young officer was informed of the happiness that awaited him, and soon obeyed the glad summons of his friends. Every thing, with respect to the young lady's fortune, was agreeably determined, and Mr. Finch became her legal protector, the third week after her arrival at the village.

Mr. Fortescue and his lady led a very uneasy life, mutual upbraidings and reproachings being their daily employment. The disappointment of their wicked designs

signs became an ample punishment, and the furrows of discontent were thrown upon each of their brows. Their vice was a bar to their felicity, as the virtue of the Brightley inhabitants, was the foundation of theirs. Each enjoyment was heightened by conscious worth; each blessing received with thankfulness of heart; and the common incidents of human infirmities, and inseparable allays of happiness in our state of mortality, were considered, by them, with pious propriety. Nor did they once conceive, that an exemption from evil could be their lot, until they had shaken off the imperfection of their nature, by that great change, of corruption for incorruption, and mortality for immortality.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

P. 8. l. 12. for disagreeable *things*, read disagreeable *circumstances*. p. 37. l. 2. for, *speaking exchanged a look*, read, *exchanged a speaking look*. p. 92. l. 7. from the bottom, for, quick sensibility, read, *tha' quick sensibility*. p. 209. l. 3. from the bottom, for *were*, read *was*.

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